2015 Heritage Pamphlet

86th Airlift Wing

Ramstein Air Force Base

Germany

Brigadier General Jon T. "Ty" Thomas

Commander

86 Airlift Wing

2015

Unit Designation	86 Airlift Wing
Higher Headquarters	Third Air Force
Commander	Brigadier General Jon T. Thomas
Vice Commander	Colonel Brandon R. Hileman
Vice Director	Mr. William P. Stewart Jr., GS-15, DAF
Historian	Dr. Silvano A. Wueschner, GS-12, DAF

Assigned Units
86th Comptroller Squadron

86th Operations Group
37th Airlift Squadron
76th Airlift Squadron
86th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron
86th Operations Support Squadron
424th Air Base Squadron, Chievres, Belgium (GSU)
496th Air Base Squadron, Moron Air Base, Spain (GSU)

86th Maintenance Group
86th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
86th Maintenance Squadron

86th Civil Engineer Group
86th Civil Engineer Squadron
786th Civil Engineer Squadron

86 Mission Support Group
2nd Air Postal Squadron
86th Force Support Squadron
86th Mission Support Squadron
86th Security Forces Squadron
86th Communications Squadron
786th Force Support Squadron
569th United States Forces Police Squadron
700th Contracting Squadron

86 Logistics Readiness Group
86th Munitions Squadron
86th Logistics Readiness Squadron
86th Vehicle Readiness Squadron
86th Materiel Maintenance Squadron

86th Medical Group
86th Medical Squadron
86th Dental Squadron
86 Medical Operations Squadron
86 Medical Support Squadron
86 Aerospace Medicine Squadron

Station
Ramstein AFB, German

Aircraft Flown
C-130J Hercules
C-20H Gulfstream
C-21A Lear Jet
C-40
C-37

Emblem

Significance: The blue background symbolizes the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations, and the wedge shaped yellow pile signifies the sun, out of which the wing's airlift mission comes. The sharp point of the pile signifies the accuracy of the wings deliveries and the pile is also a stylized lightning bolt to show how rapidly the wing responds to any contingency.

Motto *Virtus Perdurat* (Enduring Courage)

Origins of the 86th Airlift Wing

The Little Airplane Years -- 1942-1992

The origin of the 86th Airlift Wing can be traced back to Jan. 13, 1942, a little over a month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, when a rapidly expanding U.S. Army Air Forces established the 86th Bombardment Group, Light (BG/L]). The Group was activated on Feb. 10, 1942 at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma, with a cadre of five officers and 163 enlisted men, and made several moves before settling at Key Field in Meridian, Mississippi. In Mississippi, it began training on A-20 and DB-7 *Havoc* aircraft.

Douglas A-20 *Havoc*

In September 1942, the 86th BG/L was redesignated as a dive bomber group and received the A-24 *Dauntless* and A-31 *Vengeance* aircraft in exchange for the A-20s and DB-7s which were transferred to the 27th and 47th Light Bomber Groups.

A-24 *Dauntless*

A-31 *Vengeance*

The new aircraft did not improve the 86th's combat capability. Dive bombers were not found to be satisfactory for combat in the European Theater in the initial days of the war. Consequently, the A-24, the Army Air Forces version of the U.S. Navy's highly successful SBD *Dauntless*, and the A-31 were replaced as rapidly as possible. The change to

a more acceptable airframe began on Nov. 20, 1942 with the arrival of the first A-36 *Apache* (also christened the *Apache* or *Invader*). It was the ground attack version of the P-51A *Mustang*. The *Apache* was considered to be one of the finest ground attack aircraft in the world at the time.

A-36 *Apache*

The 86th BG/L trained in their new air craft through March 1943. At the beginning of April the Group prepared to move overseas. On April 29, the 86 BG/L and its three squadrons, the 309, 310, and 312 Bombardment Squadrons (Light), embarked from Staten Island and headed to Algeria. The group arrived at Mers El Khebir, a former French naval base at Oran in May. Flying operations began on May 15 from Mediouna Airport, near Casablanca, French Morocco. A-36 aircraft in-theater training began the same day. The 86th and its squadrons then began a series of moves around the theater during which it participated in operations in Sicily, Italy, Corsica, France and Germany. The 309th Squadron flew the group's first combat mission on July 2, 1943, from Trafaroui Air Base, Algeria, and the group's other squadrons began combat operations on July 6 with attacks against Cap Bon, Tunis.

The primary function of the 86th BG/L was to disrupt supplies and communications destined for the enemy troops on the front lines, and to provide close support for allied front line troops. Missions usually consisted of four to twelve planes, though there were missions requiring as few as two planes and on occasion more than twelve planes.

On close-support missions the group was assigned its target by flying to the general area, pilots then made contact with the ground support team from which they received their target instructions. The flight leader subsequently instructed his flight on how the attack would proceed. Unfortunately the Germans knew exactly what the flight was going to do and were, more often than not, ready for the attack.

Flying was often very low level, bordering on rough and violent conditions, pushing the planes and the pilots to their limits. The planes could take a lot more than the pilots. The outcome was that the pilots of the 86th FBG and other fighter bomber pilots flew a greater variety of missions, performed a greater variety of tasks and ultimately confronted a wider range of combat situations than the majority of the other pilots in World War II.

On July 14, initial elements of the 86 embarked for Comiso Airport, Sicily. The advanced echelon of the group settled into the airfield at Gela West. The remainder of the group was in place at Gela West by 21 July. The following day, July 22, 1943, the group flew its first mission providing support for the 1 Division of II Army Corps. By the time the Germans withdrew from Sicily on Aug. 17, the group had flown 2,375 combat sorties over Sicily and along the southern coast of Italy.

The group was redesignated as the 86th Fighter Bomber Group on Aug. 23, 1943, and its squadrons, the 309th, 310th and 312th Bombardment Squadrons (Light) were redesignated as the 525th, 526th and 527th Fighter-Bomber squadrons. Four days later the newly redesignated group moved to Barcelona, Sicily from where the group provided air support for the first Allied landings on the European mainland at Salerno, Italy. On Sept. 10, 1943, three days after the invasion of Salerno, advance echelons of the 86th moved to Sele Airfield, near the beachhead. Enemy shelling of the beaches caused considerable difficulty during the move, and the group did not fly its first missions until Sept. 15, 1943.

Following the fall of Naples, the group moved to Serretella Airfield and then to Pomigliano where it remained for some time. Throughout the winter and early spring of

1943-44, the 86th FBG supported Allied forces by attacking enemy lines of communication, troop concentrations and supply areas. On April 30, 1944, the 86th FBG moved to Marcianise Airfield to prepare for the spring offensive against the German Gustav Line. The 86th FBG was an active participant in Operation *Strangle*, the attempt to cut German supply lines prior to the Allied offensive striking rail and road networks, and attacking German troop and supply columns. Operation *Strangle* did not significantly cut into German supplies, but it did cut down on the German's tactical mobility and was a major factor in the Allies eventual breach of the Gustav Line. Higher headquarters recognized the outstanding work of the group with a Distinguished Unit Citation.

On May 17, 1944, the Germans pulled back from the Gustav Line at Monte Cassino, Italy. This enabled the allies to advance and beginning on May 25, 1944, the 86th flew a series of missions that were designed to disrupt the enemy's strategic attempts to reform. The group's armed reconnaissance and bombing operations, ". . . in 12 missions and 86 sorties, destroyed 217 and damaged 245 enemy vehicles, inflicted an unknown number of casualties on hostile personnel, established many effective road blocks, silenced several gun positions, and interdicted the highways into the towns of Frosinone, Cori, and Cescano." The group suffered heavy losses: two aircraft lost, six others heavily damaged, and one pilot killed.

During this period the 86 received P-40 *Warhawk*s to augment its aging A-36s, but the obsolescent P-40s were only a stopgap measure. On May 30, 1944, the 86th received its final wartime designation, as the 86th Fighter Group (FG). Between 18 and 30 June the Group relocated to Orbetello Airfield, on the west coast of Italy. On June 23, the group began to trade its A-36s and P-40s for the P-47 *Thunderbolts*. The switch to the tough, modern P-47 was especially welcome by the pilots.

Flight of P-47 *Thunderbolts*

On July 2,the 86 FBG, along with other units of the 87 FW, participated in Operation Mallory Major. In just over 72 hours the over 22 bridges spanning the Po River were either damaged or destroyed. The Supreme Allied Commander, Western Europe, lauded this performance stating that he regarded "this feat as being outstanding in the history of Air War Fare," and that the group's efforts would "have far reaching effects on the progress of this campaign in this theater."

In mid-July, the 86th continued its tour of the coast as it moved to Poretta Airfield, near Casamozza, on the island of Corsica. From Poretta the Squadrons flew bombing missions against coastal defenses in direct support of Operation *Dragoon*, the Allied invasion of southern France (Aug. 15, 1944). The Allied forces met little resistance as they moved twenty miles inland in the first twenty-four hours. The 86th attacked German units on enemy road and rail networks in northern Italy and southern France and, for the first time, flew regular escort missions for heavy bombers.

525 FBS Pilots Poretta Corsica

Tantonville Headquarters

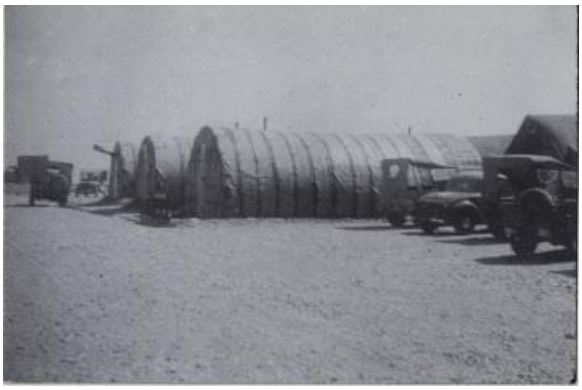
Once the invasion was completed, the 86 moved back to Italy and continued its coastal movements until Sept. 23, 1944, when its relocation to Grosseto was completed. From here the 86th flew mainly armed reconnaissance, road blocking, rail cutting, and general attacks against the enemy in the Po Valley region.

In October, the weather deteriorated, this limited the group's combat flying and impeded its movement to a new base at Pisa. On Oct. 23, the first echelon was able to move to Pisa, but the main body remained at Grosseto. Severe floods at both places impeded the move. The move to Pisa was finally completed on Nov. 6, 1944.

The group continued combat in northern Italy until February 1945, when it left the Mediterranean Theater and moved to Tantonville, France, in the Lorraine region. Subsequent operations shifted from targets in the Po Valley to targets in southern Germany.

Feb. 20, 1945 Lt. Baranek's aircraft was forced to belly land at Tantonville.

The group's first mission over Germany, a cause of some excitement, took place Feb. 25, 1945. By March, most of the 86th's missions were over Germany to attack rail lines, roads, supply dumps, enemy installations and airfields.



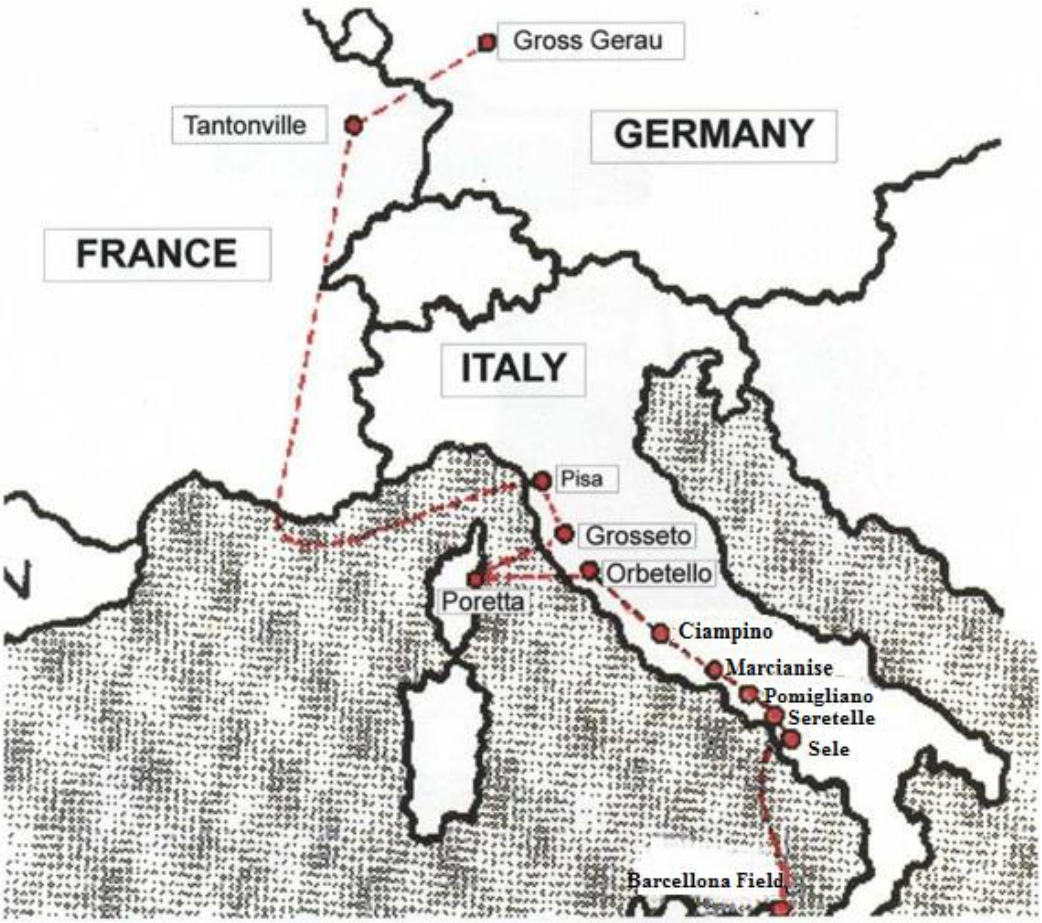
526th FBS Huts at Tantonville

The 86th FG transferred from Tantonville to airstrip Y-72, Braunshardt (near Gross Gerau), Germany, on April 16. A "maximum effort" on April 20 to stop all enemy transportation in southern Germany earned the group its second Distinguished Unit Citation.

526th FBS HQ Gross Gerau

The 86th Fighter Group flew its final combat mission on May 8, 1945. By the end of the war, the group had flown a total of 28,662 combat sorties and claimed the destruction of 9,960 vehicles, 10,420 rail cars, 1,114 locomotives and 515 enemy aircraft.

After the war in Europe ended, the 86th remained at Braunshardt, which became a replacement depot to process troops returning to French staging areas for shipment home.



Wartime 86 FBG Stations

Station	Arrived	Departed
Will Rogers Field Oklahoma	10 February 1942	1 July 1942
Hunter Field Georgia	2 July 1942	6 August 1942
Key Field Mississippi	7 August1942	17 March 1943
Camp Kilmer	19 March 1943	29 April 1943
Oran Algeria	11 May 1943	1 June 1943
Tafaroui Field Algeria	1 June 1943	30 June 1943
Korba Field Tunisia	1 July 1943	20 July 1943
W. Gela Field Sicily	21 July 1943	31 August 1943
Barcellona Field Sicily	31 August 1943	9 September 1943
Sele Field Italy	13 September 1943	14 October 1943
Seretelle Field Italy	14 October 1943	19 November 1943
Pomigliano Field Italy	19 November 1943	30 April 1944
Marcianise	30 April 1944	11 June 1944
Ciampino	11 June `944	20 June 1944
Orbetello	20 June 1944	11 July 1944
Poretta	12 July 1944	17 September 1944
Grosetto	17 September 1944	23 October 1944
Pisa	23 October 1944	20 February 1945
Tantonville	20 February 1945	16 April 1945
Braunshardt	18 April 1945	25 September 1945
Schweinfurt (post war station)	25 September 1945	

At Braunshardt flying personnel performed routine training to maintain their proficiency. On Sept. 25-26, 1945, the group moved to station R-25, Schweinfurt, Germany where it operated as a unit of the occupation force. The group's squadrons lost their personnel without replacement from October to November 1945, and group headquarters absorbed all remaining personnel on Nov. 24, 1945.

At midnight on Feb. 14, 1946, the last of the group headquarters personnel were assigned to Detachment A, 64 Fighter Wing. The designation of the group and squadrons moved, without personnel or equipment, to Bolling Field DC where it was assigned to Continental Air Forces (later, Strategic Air Command). As it was, Continental Air Forces had a surplus of units and on 31 March 1946, the 86 and its units were deactivated.

This deactivation was followed by a fast moving and often confusing set of events linked to America's realization that it was involved in a Cold War with the Soviet Union. Less than five months later, on 20 Aug 1946, the US Army Air Forces activated the 86 Group and its three squadrons, 525, 526 and 527, at Nordholz Army Air Base, near Bremerhaven, Germany, with personnel and materiel, including P-47 fighters, from another deactivated unit, the 406 Fighter Group.

The 86 FG served as part of the occupation force and at the same time maintained combat proficiency. On 14 November 1946, the group moved to Lechfeld Army Air Base, near Augsburg, Germany. Lechfeld, though, was scheduled for closure, and in January 1947, the 86 FG became a "paper unit" when all of its P-47s and all but one officer and a few enlisted men were transferred to other units.

On 15 May 1947, the "paper" group lost one fighter squadron, the 527, but gained a reconnaissance squadron and moved to Fürstenfeldbruck, Germany. As a result of the addition of a reconnaissance mission the group was redesignated as the 86 Composite Group.

On 12 June 1947 the 86 was reassigned to Neubiberg Air Base, near Munich, Germany to replace the 33 FG. On 25 June 1947, the 33 FG became non-operational and the 86 Composite Group moved from a paper unit to a "real" unit as it received personnel and P-47 *Thunderbolts* for its two squadrons. These were low time *Thunderbolts* taken from various storage depots in Germany. From 25 July to 25 August 1947, the group also exercised operational control over a P-51

Mustang squadron (later, Detachment A, 86 Composite Group).

Neubiberg Air Base

The reconnaissance squadron's assignment to the group terminated on 25 January 1948 and the group assumed its former designation as the 86 Fighter Group. There were new designations in the works and the 86 Fighter Group became the tactical component of a new organization, the 86 Fighter Wing (FW). The latter was activated at Neubiberg on 1 July 1948, a week after the Soviets blocked the land routes to Berlin and the Berlin Airlift began. The mission of the 86 FW was to provide air defense for the Berlin Airlift cargo flights, in addition to providing general air defense for the American Occupation Zone.

The 86 Joins the Jet Age

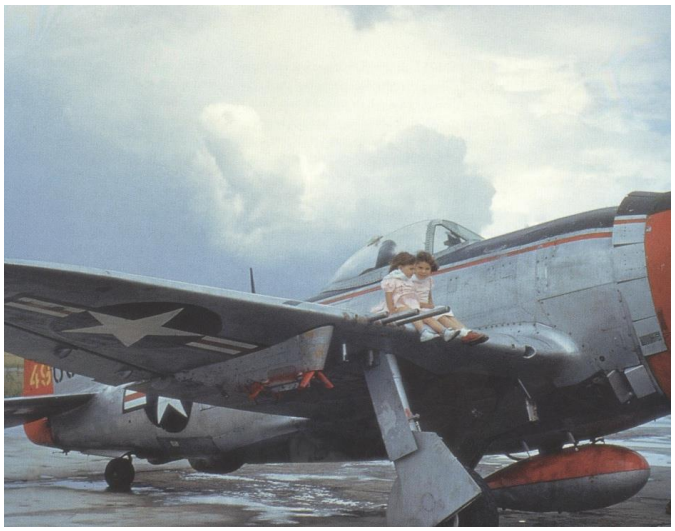
Air Force Leaders were concerned about the piston engine F-47s ability to engage Soviet jet fighters. Consequently the 86 Fighter Wing was informed in January 1950 that it would be re-equipped with F-84E *Thunderjets* and be assigned a new ground attack mission. On 20 January the wing was redesignated as the 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing (FBW). In October 1950 the 27 Fighter-Escort Wing, Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas ferried ninety-one F-84E "Thunderjets" to Neubiberg. The 86 FBW's old P-47s were distributed to other NATO countries.

In December 1950 the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) was initiated at the 86 FBW then commanded by Col. John S. Chennault. Pilots, engineers, and armors of the 86 shared their technical know-how with NATO airmen to prepare them for the arrival of jet air craft in their own countries. Nearly a year later, from 3 October to 10 October 1951, the 86 FBW played an integral part during "Exercise Combine." A number of Airmen from Norway, Denmark, and Portugal came to Neubiberg to work side by side with US Air Force personnel in the largest joint maneuver since the formation of

SHAPE. This exercise allowed NATO representatives to closely observe their American counterparts operate under combat conditions, and to compare US Air Force methods with those employed by their respective countries.

From the inception of MDAP F-84E Thunderjets and T-33 jet trainers were ferried by pilots of the 86 FBW to MDAP countries including France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. Moreover, a number of allied pilots received check-out in jet operations and aerial tactics from jet instructors of the 86 FBW.

On 11 February 1952 the 86 FBW, still based at Neubiberg, furnished four F-84-E Thunderjets for a combined infantry-artillery training exercise with the 2 Armored Division at Baumholder, Rheinland-Pfalz



The Last P-47

Republic F-84E *Thunderjet* of the 527 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 86 FBW

In the wake of the increasing conventional forces in Europe military leaders decided to construct six new bases west of the Rhine. One base, or rather two adjoining bases, Landstuhl and Ramstein were built on an auxiliary Luftwaffe landing strip on a portion of the uncompleted autobahn between Landstuhl and Ramstein, near Kaiserslautern.

On 17 February 1952, Detachment 1, Headquarters 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Clyde M. Burwell arrived at, what was to become, Landstuhl Air Base (AB) to supervise the construction of the facilities on what consisted of the Ramstein flight line and facilities south of Kisling Memorial Drive. An immediate priority was to construct security fencing for the accompanying aircraft of the advanced party.

Temporary quarters at Landstuhl

On 21 February, 1952, Col. John Chennault, Commander of the 86 FBW, the Commander of the 86 Maintenance Supply Group, the Chief of the Supply Branch, and members of the 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing staff visited the construction site.

On 25 Feb 1952 Col Chennault announced that plans for moving to Landstuhl Air Force Base had been postponed. On 2 March 1952 six (6) jets from the 527 FBS led by Squadron Commander LtCol George B. Simler did land at Landstuhl but returned to Neubiberg on 4 March due to the ongoing construction and lack of operational and maintenance support.

Engineers at Landstuhl

On 27 March 1952 six (6) 527 FBS air craft arrived and stayed through 10 April. In the meantime, on 5 April 1952, the Air Force officially established Landstuhl AB and

assigned the 86 Air Base Group to administer it.

The base was not yet fully operational when the first mishap was recorded. This took place on 13 Jun 1952 when Capt. Clair P. Chennault, 527 FBS, son of Lt Gen Claire Chennault and brother of the 86 FBW Commander John Chennault, was in takeoff position at Landstuhl, and the plane's engine exploded. He escaped unharmed.

Landstuhl Air Base, the southernmost of the two bases, finally opened for operations on 5 August 1952 and the 86 Fighter Bomber Wing relocated here from Neubiberg AB, Germany (near Munich).

It was ironic that the 86 FBW was transferred to Landstuhl in 1952 since the wartime missions of the 86 FBG after 25 February 1945 were flown over northwestern Baden Wuertemberg, Southwestern Hessen and over Rheinland-Pfalz. Aircraft damaged during missions were unable to return to the airfield at Tantonville or Braunshardt and crashed or made forced landings in Rheinland-Pfalz or just east of the Rhein in Hessen and Baden-Wuertemberg. Moreover the last war time headquarters of the 86 FBG was only an hour away at Braunshardt near Gross Gerau.

F-86F *Sabre* of the 527 Fighter Bomber Squadron, 86 FBW (insignia at the top of the tail)

On 23 Mar 1953, The Air Force used the 86 FBW for "service test" reorganization and changed the wing's structure from four groups to two groups, one combat and one support. The purpose of the test was to determine the maximum efficiency obtainable with the minimum of personnel.

F-86Ds which provided an all-weather capability.

In April 1953, the 86 FBW completed its move to Landstuhl and became the first unit in USAFE to fly the F-86F *Sabre Jet*. The F-86F had been very successful as both a fighter and fighter bomber in the Korean War, and marked a quantum increase in the Wing's capabilities.

A year later the 86 was redesignated as the 86 Fighter-Interceptor Wing (FIW) and assumed a new mission for air defense for the central European region. For this mission, the wing replaced its F-86Fs with rocket-armed

On 27 July 1956, Headquarters, United States Air Force, approved the 86 FIW's emblem, which remains the same one used by the 86 Airlift Wing today. The emblem was originally approved by the US Army Air Forces for the World War II-era 86 Bombardment Group (Dive) on 17 Oct 42. In the revised emblem the bomb was removed from the center.

Emblems

On 1 December 1957, the two bases of Ramstein and Landstuhl were consolidated into a single entity known as Ramstein and Landstuhl Air Base, but common usage eventually shortened it to Ramstein Air Base.

During this period, the 86 FIW controlled as many as seven squadrons operating from five different locations, and earned its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for October 1955 to October 1958.

Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force moved from Wheelus AB, Libya to Ramstein on 15 November 1959, and that same year the 86 FIW wing converted F-102A *Delta Daggers*.

F-102 Delta Dagger

Soon afterwards, on 18 November 1960, the 86 was redesignated as the 86 Air Division (Defense). This change marked the beginning of a new era as the unit's organizational structure absorbed five aircraft control and warning squadrons, including a small number of F-100 *Super Sabre* and F-104 *Starfighter* aircraft. At Ramstein, the 526 FIS was equipped with F-102s in 1960, while the 440, 512, 513 and 514 FISs began to retire their F-86's during November and December. They were deactivated on 8 January 1961.

F-102 Squadrons assigned to the 86 AD at detached sites were:

32 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Soesterberg AB, Netherlands

496 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Hahn AB, West Germany

527 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Bitburg AB, West Germany

526 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Ramstein AB, West Germany

However, at the time of its arrival in Europe, the F-102 was already being replaced by the McDonnell F-101B *Voodoo*, the Convair F-106 D*elta Dart,* and by the much more versatile McDonnell F-4 Phantom II in the Aerospace Defense Command as interceptors. In USAFE, one of the 86 F-102 units, the 497 FIS, transitioned to F-4Cs in 1963. It was redesignated as the 497 Tactical Fighter Squadron and transferred to George AFB, California.

The 86 AD continued to fly an air defense mission using its respective fighter interceptor squadrons. At the same time the 86 AD provided control of the airways by way of various aircraft control and warning units. In recognition of how well it accomplished the myriad of missions it was assigned, and for implementing the single 412L Air Weapons Control System acquired by the Air Force, the 86 received a second Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period from July 1964 to June 1965.

In 1966, the 86 AD was with faced more changes. President DeGaulle announced that France was withdrawing from NATO. In 1967 France withdrew from NATO which had an immediate effect on the NATO military command structure, moreover, foreign troops were forced to leave France. This led to far-reaching changes, including a major reorganization in 1967 which resulted in the 26 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and its RF-4C aircraft and the 26 Combat Support Group (CSG) being relocated to Ramstein and assuming responsibility for base operations. The 86 AD returned to its previous designation as the 86 FIW, and on on 14 November 1968 it was deactivated, leaving the 26 TRW as Ramstein's principal operating unit with the 7 Special Operations Squadron, the 526 Tactical Fighter Squadrons and the 38 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons. Shortly after this realignment, the Canadian Armed Forces reorganized and downsized their forces in Europe, and the Canadian 3 Wing left Zweibrücken Air Base. Since Zweibrücken was now open the Air Force reactivated the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) at the base on 1 November 1969. Be

that as it may, the new designation did not coincide with the wing's mission as its forces at Zweibrücken consisted of a single tactical reconnaissance squadron of RF-4s. A second reconnaissance squadron was assigned to the 86 TFW in 1971. The designation conundrum was resolved as part of a USAFE command-wide effort to realign functions and streamline operations called *Creek Action*.

On 31 January 1973, in what was called an "unusual ceremony," the commander of the 26 TRW, Brigadier General William Georgi, traded his 26 TRW flag for the flag of the 86 TFW, and became commander of the 86 TFW. The 26 TRW and 38 TRS moved to Zweibrücken AB. The outcome was that the name of the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing was transferred back to Ramstein. The 86 CSG accepted responsibility for base operations. Within a short period of time its sole fighter squadron, the 526 TFS was joined by the 512 Tactical Fighter Squadron as it returned to its old home at Ramstein. Both squadrons flew the F-4E *Phantom II* which served the 86 longer at than any other aircraft except for the C-130 which arrived in 1994.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Ramstein began to gain hardened aircraft shelters as part of the Theater Air Base Vulnerability (TABV, pronounced "Tab-Vee") program, and on 27 Jun 1969 the base accepted six newly-constructed TABV aircraft shelters. These shelters provided a high level of protection from a variety of types of attack and were the first of 342 TABV shelters to be built in Central Europe.

In 1981, four hardened operational facilities were built at various locations at Ramstein. They were designed for tactical air support for peace and war time tasking. The squadron operation facilities contained flight planning areas, briefing rooms and intelligence areas. The facilities also included all necessary utilities and chemical and biological protection measures which enabled command and control of the squadron during an attack.

F-4Es of the 86 TFW

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The First Terrorist Attacks

On 31 August 1981 a terrorist bomb hidden in a parked vehicle exploded between B and C wings of Ramstein's building 201 (Headquarters USAFE and Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Central Europe). The bomb resulted in sixteen causalities and heavy damage to both areas. Both areas were evacuated pending renovation. Then on 10 April 1986, the bombing of *La Belle* disco in Berlin brought 35 casualties to the hospital at Landstuhl.

The Arrival of the F-16

On 20 Sep 1985, as the wing approached its fortieth year of service in Germany, the first F-16C *Fighting Falcon* arrived, and the 86 TFW began its conversion from the F-4E to the highly sophisticated F-16C/D *Fighting Falcon*. The 86 TFW became the first operational unit to receive this latest variation of the *Fighting Falcon with* the arrival of four Block 30 F-16Cs on 7 October 1985. On 7 July 1986, the last F-4E departed Ramstein.

Changing of the Guard: the F-4E (top) to the F-16C (bottom), 1986

Disaster Strikes

Flying military aircraft has inherent dangers, and Ramstein was reminded of that fact when three Italian demonstration aircraft collided at 15:46 in mid-air while performing the intricate "Pierced Heart" maneuver during Ramstein's annual *Flugtag* on 31 Aug 1988. Flaming debris and aircraft parts careened into the assembled crowd with tragic consequences. The disaster resulted in 70 fatalities (4 Americans and 66 foreign nationals), and injuries sustained by over 500 spectators. Quick reactions from emergency response forces minimized collateral damage. Within ten minutes over 200 casualties were taken to the hospital at Landstuhl, saving many lives.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the End of the Cold War

The members of the 86' along with the rest of the world, watched the Communist Bloc countries of Eastern Europe with fascination as the events of the late 1989 unfolded. The Berlin Wall began to come down on November 9, 1989 and the celebrations began. Members of the 86 TFW wing went to Berlin to revel in the historic

moment as East Berliners flooded into the west. Members of the 86 TFW brought back pieces of the Wall, including large slabs of concrete that were placed in an area between USAFE headquarters and the Officers Club. There was a good deal of optimism about the future in November 1989. At the beginning of 1990 there was a feeling that the Cold War was in its waning days and questions about the future of US forces in Europe began to arise. The exuberance displayed in those halcyon days of the winter of ’89 was soon overshadowed by events in the Middle East.

Berlin Wall Remnant behind USAFE Headquarters

Desert Shield/Desert Storm

When the Soviet Union collapsed the end of the Cold War was in sight and the 86 and Ramstein had just begun to absorb this turn of events when Iraq invaded its neighbor Kuwait on 2 August 1990.

The following day the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 660 (1990) which condemned the invasion and demanded that Iraq withdraw its forces immediately and unconditionally from Kuwait. The United Nations passed 12 resolutions in all in which it urged Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. In the meantime a 30 nation force led by the United States arrived in Saudi Arabia to defend it and its oil installations from a

possible attack by Iraq. The operation dubbed Desert Shield began on August 7, 1990.

Under Operation *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* the F-16s of the 86 Wing did not deploy to the Persian Gulf as so many of its USAFE counterparts did. Instead, Ramstein became an intermediate support base for American forces deployed to the Persian Gulf. This was a harbinger of things to come.

On 10 August 1990, Ramstein began receiving MAC stage crews and the base became an overflow airfield for Rhein-Main AB supporting strategic airlift traffic to the Persian Gulf. In addition to serving as a central overflow hub for airlift traffic flying between the US and the Arabian Peninsula, Ramstein also established an intermediate engine repair facility for deployed F-16s; became a huge collection and distribution center for gulf-bound munitions; and on 15 Jan 1991 Ramstein AB's aeromedical staging facility activated a 150-bed hospital and blood transshipment center in Hangar 1. The hospital provided triage to its first patients from the Persian Gulf on the same day. Additionally, personnel from virtually every squadron subordinate to the 316 Air Division augmented Air Force and Army units deployed to the gulf.

In August 1990, a Military Airlift Command C-5 assigned to MAC's 60 Military Airlift Wing crashed in an open field outside the airfield perimeter just seconds after taking off from Ramstein's westbound runway. The C-5, loaded with medical supplies, dry rations and 180,000 pounds of fuel, had been bound for the Persian Gulf. Only four of the seventeen crewmembers and duty passengers survived.

Following *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, the 86 TFW and its two fighter squadrons began flying combat air patrol and armed reconnaissance missions over northern Iraq in support of Operation *Provide Comfort*. From 6 April 1991, when the operation began, until September 1993 when its commitment ended, the wing flew nearly 5,000 sorties over Iraq. For its participation in *Provide Comfort*, the 86 TFW received credit in a Joint Meritorious Unit Award, though the award did little to placate the wing personnel who felt they had "missed" the war.

On 1 May 1991, the 86 TFW was redesignated as the 86 Fighter Wing (FW) and underwent a complete change in its organizational structure as a test base for the USAFE *Corona South* wing reorganization program, an effort to "flatten" command lines and consolidate span of control. Ramstein's 316 Air Division AD and 377 Combat

Support Wing were inactivated and all of their former functions placed under the operational control of the 86 Fighter Wing. The lessons learned at Ramstein were applicable Air Force-wide as other organizations converted to this new organizational structure.

Combat Success

On 17 August 1993, the 86 received its first LANTIRN-capable Block 40 F-16C which eventually replaced the earlier Block 30 F-16s. One month later, the 86 began flying combat air patrol and close air support missions over Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation *Deny Flight.* Under *Deny Flight,* Serbian aircraft were forbidden to fly over Bosnian territory, and many of the 86 F-16s deployed to Aviano AB, Italy to enforce this restriction. On 28 February 1994, the 86 salved some it its frustrations from missing *Desert Storm* when two F-16Cs from the 86's 526 Tactical Fighter Squadron on patrol were directed to intercept six Serbian Soko G-4 *Super Galebs.* The Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AWACS) detected the *Galebs* bombing targets in the town of Bugojno, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The *Galebs* were warned twice to land or leave the UN no-fly zone.

Both warnings were ignored and the two F-16s were vectored in to intercept the *Galebs.* Two more warnings were given, and the F-16Cs were given clearance to fire. F-16C 89-2137 flown by Capt. Robert Wright fired a single AIM-120 which dispatched the lead *Galeb,* and then fired two Sidewinders which destroyed two more *Galebs.* The second F-16C flown by Capt. Scott O'Grady fired a Sidewinder at the fourth aircraft, but this missile missed. A second flight of F-16Cs was vectored in by the AWACS, and the lead aircraft from this flight (89-2009) destroyed a fourth *Galeb* near Banja-Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The remaining two *Galebs* managed to escape Bosnian airspace via Croatia. This was the first offensive action ever performed by NATO warplanes.

A G-4 *Super Galeb*

At the same time that the F-16s supported *Deny Flight*, the end of the Cold War was bringing major force structure changes. HQAF decided to change the 86 Wing from a fighter wing to a wing devoted to intra-theater airlift, and for the 86 Wing to assume the C-130 airlift mission previously held by the 435 Airlift Wing at Rhein Main Air Base, Germany, which was slated for inactivation.

The Birth of the 86 Airlift Wing

Since its founding in 1942, the 86 Wing designation was associated with tactical fighters, fighter-bombers, and interceptors; but as noted above, the end of the Cold War brought about major force structure changes throughout the Air Force, and the 86 Wing was no exception. On 1 June 1992, the 86 Fighter Wing only had F-16s in its inventory, began a slow move to airlift operations.

The wing took over the 58 Airlift Squadron (AS) with its small executive fleet of C-12, C-20 *Gulfstream*, C-21 *Lear Jet*, CT-43, C-135, and UH-1 aircraft. After the wing gained this airlift mission, the wing designation was changed from the 86 Fighter Wing to the 86 Wing.

C-12 *Huron*

C-20 *Gulfstream*

C-21 *Lear Jet*

On 1 July 1993 Detachment 1, 435 Operations Group, at Chievres, Belgium was redesignated as the Det 1, 86 Operations Group, bringing a C 9A into the 86 inventory and along with it the responsibility to provide direct airlift support to SACEUR.

On 1 July 1993, the 86 also added an aeromedical evacuation mission when the Second Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES) and the 55 Aeromedical Airlift Squadron (AAS) were transferred from Rhein-Main AB to Ramstein AB. The 55 AAS added another C-9A *Nightingale*, to the 86 Wing inventory.

C-9A Nightingale

Three months after the 55 AAS moved to Ramstein (1 October 1993) it was inactivated and the 75 Airlift Squadron was activated to take its place. 55 AAS personnel, funds and equipment were assigned to the 75 AS. The 58 AS was also inactivated and personnel, funds and equipment assigned to the newly activated 76 Airlift Squadron.

To complete the shuffle, the 2 AES inactivated on 16 August 1994. The 86 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron was activated in its place with 2 AES' personnel, funds and equipment.

On 5 February 1994, Prior to its inactivation the 2 AES assisted in evacuating victims from Sarajevo following a mortar attack in a public shopping district. This was Ramstein's first major airlift after assuming the airlift mission.

The Shift to Airlift

The 435 AW sent approximately 200 personnel from the 37 Airlift Squadron (AS) as a Detachment to Ramstein on 7 March 1994 to start the flow of C-130 personnel to the 86. This small detachment began planning and administrative activities and served as a central point for incoming personnel and equipment transferring to Ramstein. On 28 June 1994, the first two C-130E *Hercules* aircraft to be permanently based at Ramstein arrived. Gradually more C-130Es and personnel arrived; ultimately the 37 Airlift Squadron had a total of 19 C-130Es in its inventory and approximately 1,100 personnel on its rolls.

37 AS C-130E

Concurrent with the arrivals of the C-130s and their personnel, the 86 Wing's F-16s dispersed from Ramstein. On 21 July 1994 the 86 Wing held a “Fighter Farewell” ceremony for the departure of its last F-16s to the 31 Fighter Wing at Aviano Air Base, Italy.

On 1 October 1994 the final transition to intra theater airlift took place as the 37 Airlift Squadron “Blue Tail Flies” officially transferred to the 86 Wing and the wing became the 86 Airlift Wing with the 37 AS, 75 AS, 76 AS, and the 86 AES as its operational units.

The New Mission

The new 86 Airlift Wing was responsible for United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) intra-theater airlift throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and for supporting operations and exercises throughout the European theater. The reoriented wing’s successful transition from F-16s to C-130s and its airlift support of numerous European contingencies earned it the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 July 1993-30 June 1995, bringing the wing’s total Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards to six.

During the transition to an airlift wing the 86 AW also inherited an ongoing airlift mission in support of Operation *Provide Promise*. The operation began on 9 January 1992 and ended on 9 January 1996. The 37 AS, flew its first sortie to Sarajevo on 3 July 1992. Moreover, it flew the bulk of the airlift provided by the United States during the operation. On 14 January 1995 the 37 AS began flying its *Provide Promise* missions from Falconara AB, Ancona, Italy.

The first real test for the 86 AW and Ramstein AB as the USAFE center of intra-theater airlift operations came during the latter half of 1995. From 29 August to 21 September, the 76 AS deployed a total of 2 C-21 aircraft and 12 personnel to Naples, Italy to support Operation *Deliberate Force*. The deployed aircraft flew over 30 missions from Naples while another eight missions originated from Ramstein AB. In December 1995 the 86 AW participated in Operation *Joint Endeavor*, which witnessed the deployment of US and allied peacekeeping forces to Bosnia.

The operation, while highly successful, was marred by the crash of the 86 AW's sole CT-43 on 3 April 1996 near Dubrovnik, Croatia. The crash claimed the lives of 35 people, including that of Secretary of Commerce Ronald H. Brown, who had been on a mission to improve the economy and infrastructure of the former Yugoslavia.

Wreckage of Secretary Brown's CT-43

Joint Endeavor concluded 20 December 1996, and US forces became a part of the new NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina known as Operation *Joint Guard*. On 20 June 1998 *Joint Guard* ended and the Stabilization Force transitioned to a slightly smaller follow-on force, and was renamed Operation *Joint Forge*.

The 86 AW, augmented by active duty, Air National Guard and Reserve units from the United States, successfully sustained this effort by delivering US Army and Air Force peacekeeping forces and equipment into the area. By 31 December 2000, the 86 AW and its supporting units had transported over 48,000 tons of cargo and 111,164 personnel into, around, and out of the theater of operations.

In April 1996 civil disturbances broke out in the Republic of Liberia. As the violence escalated the US Embassy in Monrovia requested a Noncombatant Evacuation Order for approximately 270 American Citizens and 470 third country nationals in the vicinity of the capital. On 9 April HQ USAFE tasked the 86 AW to provide a deployment contingent in support of the NEO. This Operation was dubbed *Assured Response*. The wing set up a crisis action team to direct the deployment effort.

Eight aeromedical personnel and two C-130s with 50 personnel deployed to Dakar, Senegal. During the two week operation, C-130 aircrews flew 30 missions and evacuated 625 Americans and foreign nationals.

US Citizens Awaiting Evacuation from Liberia during *Assured Response*

From February to March 1997, the wing executed Operation *Assured Lift* with five C-130s and 147 personnel delivering peacekeepers of the Economic Community of West African to Liberia. In March 1997, the wing's Contingency Operations Flight supported another NEO, Operation *Silver Wake*, this time in the Balkan state of Albania. The 86 AW personnel oversaw 62 missions by CH-46s, CH-47s and CH-53s moving 1,550 evacuees. For its support of *Joint Guard* and *Assured Lift*, along with numerous other contingencies during the period 1 Jul 96 - 30 Jun 97, the 86 AW received its seventh Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

During 1997 and 1998, the 86 AW supported continued operations in the Persian Gulf Region, Operations *Northern Watch* and *Southern Watch*, as well as *Phoenix Scorpion I-IV*, the deployment of forces as a show of force to compel Iraq to comply with UN weapons inspectors. The *Phoenix Scorpion* deployments provided the means for later coercive air strikes against Iraq. From 1998 through 2000, 86 AW personnel supported Operation *Provide Hope*, under which excess medical supplies were delivered to the Republic of Moldova in the former Soviet Union.

86 AW Personnel Supporting *Provide Hope*

In 1999 the former Republic of Yugoslavia sought to reclaim the region of Kosovo which ultimately resulted in a period of "ethnic cleansing." When Yugoslavia failed to comply with provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1199 and continued to pursue ethnic cleansing, NATO, led by the United

States, began Operation *Allied Force*. This operation focused on bombing key Yugoslavian targets in an effort to persuade President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia to comply with UN resolutions. The 86 AW flew 396 missions in support of *Allied Force*. The wing transported 3,000 tons of cargo and 1,492 passengers to various destinations within the European theater.

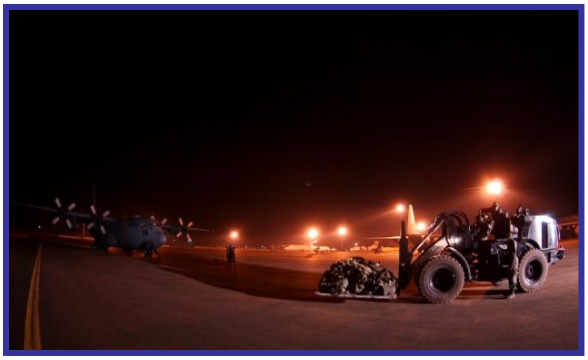
As *Allied Force* concluded, the 86 AW began Operation *Joint Guardian*. This was a peacekeeping operation in Kosovo designed to establish a secure environment for the return of the refugees. The 86 AW also executed the first combat airdrop into Kosovo, during Operation *Rapid Guardian*, when it flew seven sorties for the U.S. Army and dropped approximately 130 US Army Paratroopers.

37 AS C-130E dropping US Army paratroopers during Operation *Rapid Guardian*

The Founding of the 86 Contingency Response Group

The new security environment in the Balkans demonstrated the need for a rapid-deployment "first-in" force to secure a contingency airfield, then establish and the maintain airfield and aerial port operations and finally to provide force protection. The Air Force responded to this need with the activation of its first Contingency Response Group (CRG), the 86 CRG, on 26 February 1999. The 86 CRG was a part of the 86

AW, and had two subordinate units: the 86 Air Mobility Squadron and 786 Security Forces Squadron. Moreover the 86 CRG incorporated more than 30 different jobs. This new self-contained element became the Air Force standard for such units, and proved its utility during the Kosovo conflict.



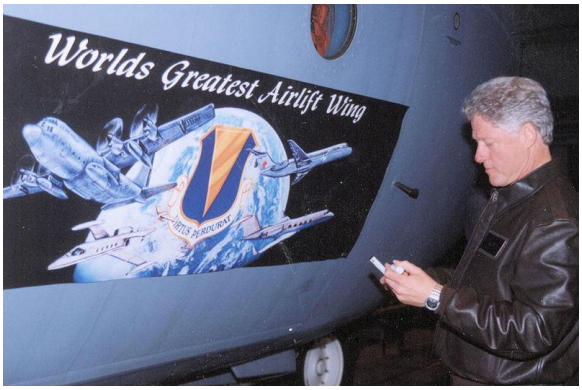
CRG "Opening the Base" Operations

Other Operations

From 24 March to 14 July 1999, the 86 AW participated in Operation *Shining Hope*, a mission of humanitarian support for refugees displaced by the conflict in the Balkans with shelter and food. This new operation was based at Tirane, Albania.

The 86 AW provided support in different ways. The 37 AS for example provided airlift to forward deployed units of the 86 and other organizations. The 37 and its augmenting forces flew 323 missions; airlifted 4,950,980 pounds of cargo and 2,080 passengers to Tirane (5 April -30 June 99).

On 5 May 1999, US President William Clinton, accompanied by Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Henry Shelton and a large assortment of congressional delegates visited the 86 AW and Ramstein AB.



President William J. Clinton at Ramstein 5 May 1999

During his visit the President confirmed the 86 AW's informal motto, "The World's Greatest Airlift Wing."

As the year 2000 approached, the 89 and the KMC devoted much attention to the dreaded Y2K bug, but there were no disruptions on the base.

Communications Personnel waiting for the
Y2K crash which never happened

The New Millennium

On 1 January 2000, the Air Force introduced the concept of *Air Expeditionary Forces*, quickly known as AEFs, to respond to the increasing number of contingencies which called for worldwide deployments and to balance the burdens (and opportunities) for such deployments. The AEF concept attempted to provide some measure of "predictability, " by placing airmen either on call for deployment or actually deploying them for 90 days every 15 months.

The concept was intended to inform all personnel of the dates of their 90-day deployment period well in advance in order for them to be adequately prepared. The remaining 12 months of the 15 month AEF cycle was to be spent performing routine activities: training, participating in exercises, working on civilian or military education and spending time with their families.

The Balkans and Africa were much of the operational focus of the 86 AW in 2000. From March through April 2000, the 86 AW sent seven 37 AS C-130s and crews Hoedspruit Airfield, Limpopo, South Africa in support of Joint Task Force *Atlas Response.* This relief effort was carried out in southern Mozambique and South Africa following torrential rains and flooding there. The 37 flew over 170 sorties transporting over 600,000 pounds of cargo and 1,096 passengers.

37 AS C-130E Supporting Humanitarian Operations

During *Atlas Response*, a new capability was provided by a 37 AS C-130E, serial number 68-0938. It was the first USAF C-130 to be equipped with the *Keen Sage* camera system. This system was mounted in a metal-encased sphere, slightly larger than a basketball. It housed three sophisticated video capture lenses, a daylight television, a 955mm fixed focal length zoom and infrared in six fields. Two operators performed airborne sensor operations from a pallet workstation which was strapped down in the cargo hold of the Hercules. The lenses scanned full circle and along 90 degrees of elevation. The airborne camera operators could beam live analog video and digitally-captured still images back to a ground station, where it could be recorded and sent to relief organizations and other users.

Atlas Response was the first operational deployment of a C-130 with the *Keen Sage* camera system, and the 37 C-130 flew 39 sorties using this new capability to search for displaced refugees so they could be provided humanitarian assistance. Eventually the wing received eight *Keen Sage* configured aircraft.

At the same time, members of the 86 Medical Group deployed to the nation of Cameroon for exercise MEDFLAG/*Brilliant Lion.* 120 doctors and medical technicians administered 20,000 immunizations and performed over 70 surgeries, and delivered and distributed over 50,000 pounds of medical supplies. In August 2001, the 86 Contingency Response Group deployed to Africa as part of Operation *Focus Relief*, the movement and support of UN-mandated peace keeping operations in Sierra Leone.

On 17 August 2000, the 86 Wing moved a large contingent of U.S. soldiers to a staging base in Skopje, Macedonia, then on to Kosovo as part of NATO's *Immediate Ready Force*. By 31 December 2000 the 86 AW, supported by deployed C-130 units, transported 5,000 tons of cargo and 30,604 personnel to support US forces in Kosovo.

In addition to the wing's "on call" status to support any European crisis, the wing positioned aircraft and medical personnel at emergency landing fields in Spain, Morocco and Banjul for every National Air and Space Administration (NASA) Space Shuttle

launch. The Wing also flew missions for the On-Site Inspection Agency as part of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

May 2000 was a banner month for the 86. Air Force Chief of Staff General Mike Ryan presented the 86 Airlift Wing with the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon for its actions from 1 September 1997, to 31 August 1999. Additionally, the 86's C-130 squadron, the 37 Airlift Squadron "Bluetail Flies," won the 2000 USAFE Best Airlift Tanker Squadron award.

The Foreshadowing of the Global War on Terror

On 25 June 1996, a terrorist bomb devastated the Khobar Towers complex within Saudi Arabia. The 86 AW deployed 30 aeromedical personnel in response to the Khobar Towers bombing to assist with the evacuation of 59 casualties. At the time, the bombing was considered a random act of terrorism. Little did the personnel of the wing know that this bomb that foreshadowed a war against a covert enemy, the global terrorist.

On 7 August 1998, terrorist bombs damaged the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar Es-Salaam, Tanzania. Over 200 persons lost their lives and 4,000 were injured as a result of the blast. The 86 sent 51 personnel to support the airlift portion, Determined Response of the Joint Task Force Resolute Response. The 86 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, with C-141 support, evacuated US victims to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

During *Determined Response* the 76 Airlift Squadron provided operational support /airlift support for Secretary of State Madeline Albright during her hasty return to the US on 7 and 8 August in order to conduct high level discussions about the bombings. The personnel of the 75 AS also provided 100 life preservers and assisted in the launching of two AMC C-141s that were used to shuttle the wounded back to Ramstein Air Base (AB).

Aircrew members of the 86 AES joined Landstuhl's Critical Care Air Transport Team aboard the aircraft. These individuals help triage the injured and provided in-flight patient care for ten Americans and twelve Kenyans seriously injured in the bombing. The 86 AES also assisted in providing litter support to and from the C-141 for further evaluation and care at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and for transport to state-side hospitals. On 11 August 1998 the

Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC) held a ceremony to honor the 11 fallen American comrades, among them AF, SMSgt Sherry Lynn Olds, age 40 from Panama City Florida, and AF Civilian, Arlene Kirk, age 50 from South Bend, Indiana.

On 12 October 2000 the US Navy destroyer *USS Cole* was attacked, while refueling at the port at Aden, Yemen, by terrorists. The latter pulled up close to the *Cole* in a small boat and detonated a bomb, which opened a 40 by 40 foot hole on its port side. The explosion killed 17 sailors and wounded 40 others. The Wing's 86 AES and 37 AS evacuated the 28 injured sailors (9 litter and 19 ambulatory) from Yemen to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for immediate lifesaving medical care. Both squadrons were recognized for their meritorious mission. The National Aeronautics Association chose the two squadrons to share the Mackay Trophy for performing heroic rescue efforts in record time for victims of the USS Cole tragedy during the 6,000 mile round-trip journey between Aden, Yemen, Djibouti, Africa and Ramstein, Germany. Aircrew members responded brilliantly and launched two rescue C-9 crews within one hour of alert.

The Mackay Trophy

The winners were

E10E1 Mission
LtCol Marlon Nailling
Maj John Andrus
Maj Kathryn Drake
Maj David Sellars
Capt Richard Hunt
Capt Kevin Keith
Capt Karey Dufour
Capt Karin Petersen
Capt Donna Fournier
1Lt Lucas Jobe
SSgt Edward Franceschina
SSgt Heather Robertson
SSgt Bradley Atherton
SSgt Ryan Reller
SrA Chad Schusko
SSgt Brian Hoffmeyer

E10E2 Mission
Col Byron Hepburn
LtCol Linda Torrens
Maj Jonas Allman
Maj. Thomas Jenkins
Maj Lola Casby
Maj Jeffrey Davis
Capt Raymond Chehy

Capt Natalie Sykes
Capt Michael Smith
Capt Tim Carter
1Lt Jennifer Bagozzi
SSgt Alan Wooldridge
SSgt Kelly Pollard
SSgt Trent Arnold
SSgt Juan Garza
SrA Anna Duffner

Critical Care Air Transport Team
Col David Welling, USAF
Maj Stephan A. Alkins, USA
Capt Raymond M. Nudo, USAF
Capt Andrew J. Reynolds, USAF
Capt Bernd T. Wegner, USAF
SSgt Chyrise M. Jenkins, USAF
SSgt Christopher E. Whited, USAF

The 86 AW's New Mission: The Global War on Terror

On 11 September 2001, terrorists attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon.

The 86 AW and the KMC was stunned by the 11 September attacks, and there was an outpouring of sympathy from the German community.

Ramstein Air Base and other KMC installations went to a high state of alert and a number of establishments were put off limits to reduce the possibility of further terrorist incidents. There were no immediate new taskings for the 86 AW, still it was clear that America would be striking back and that the 86 AW would play an significant role in that effort.

The first military response to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States came on Oct. 7, 200 It was assigned the name Operation *Enduring Freedom* and was aimed at the destruction of terrorist training camps and infrastructure within Afghanistan, the capture of al Qaeda leaders, and the cessation of terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

The military response escalated further on 16 October 2002 when President Bush signed the newly passed Congressional

Resolution for the "Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq." This was the beginning of Operation *Iraqi Freedom.*

As soon as this occurred, the 86 Medical Group initiated planning for a 150-bed expansion of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) and initiated the initial steps to prepare building 2117 (Ramstein's South Side Fitness Center) for contingency use as an Aeromedical Staging Facility. The day after the president's announcement, the 86 Maintenance Group and the 86 Logistics Readiness Squadron Traffic Management Office configured 3.4 million pounds of cargo in just 120 hours, and began moving munitions for deployment. This was an operation that normally took 30 days. In November 2002, 29 members of the 86 Civil Engineering Group were deployed to Ganci Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, to prepare for possible operations in Iraq.

In December, the tempo increased further. A request was sent from the Southern European Task Force which requested the 86 CRG to evaluate eight airfields in northern Iraq. On 27 December members of the Youngstown, Ohio 757 Airlift Reserve Squadron, 910 Airlift Wing, arrived to join the Selfridge, Michigan Air National Guard's 1637 Airlift Squadron, 127 AW, as part of the 86 Airlift Wing's 38 Airlift Squadron (Provisional). With the new arrivals, the combined forces and assets of the 38 (P) Squadron totaled 154 personnel and four C-130 aircraft. The 38 AS (P) took primarily responsibility for providing airlift for forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation *Joint Forge.*

The high operations tempo continued in 2003. On 3 January the 86 Materiel Maintenance Squadron (MMS) began moving War Readiness Materiel (WRM) for deployment. Over the next eight months, the 86 MMS shipped 8,340 tons of WRM to 13 locations in 9 countries. By August every USAFE location that supported Operation *Iraqi Freedom* and Operation *Enduring Freedom* had received WRM from the 86 MMS. The 86 MMS also deployed seven members to various contingency locations to include Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan, and Bagram, Afghanistan.

On 14 February, the 37 Airlift Squadron began using its *Keen Sage* equipped C-130s to conduct observation missions over Iraq in preparation for possible action. The squadron flew a total of 14 missions, most at night, covering 5 to 15 targets per flight. To honor this rather "un-airlift" operation, the

crews gave themselves the name of the "37 Airlift Reconnaissance Squadron."

On 11 Mar 2003, the 86 AW's 38 Airlift Squadron (Provisional) Squadron, operating from Constanta, Romania, flew its first Operation *Iraqi Freedom* mission. Initially 38 (P) Squadron flew missions with just 4 aircraft. As these missions began help was on the way. A few days earlier, on 3 March, the 757 Airlift Reserve Squadron, 910 Airlift Wing, Youngstown, Ohio, and the 1637 Airlift Squadron, 123 Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, Louisville, Kentucky, were called to active duty for one year to join 38 (P) Squadron. The units arrived between 21 and 27 March. The influx of personnel and equipment increased 38 (P) Squadron from four C-130s and 154 personnel to ten C-130s and 306 personnel.

On 17 March, President Bush delivered an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein that he and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Saddam refused. On 20 March, the 86 Contingency Response Group went through the 86 Airlift Wing Deployment Control Center, Personnel Deployment Function, and Vehicle Deployment Function in less than three hours, again a record time.

Fight's On…

On 20 March the Coalition's began its air assault on Baghdad, and Coalition Forces began the invasion of Iraq. The 86 AW's participation began on March 27, 2003, with the departure of 20 members of the 86 Expeditionary Contingency Response Group, from Aviano Air Base, Italy. They parachuted into Bashur airfield in northern Iraq, to prepare the field for airlift operations. The 86 ECRG team parachuted into Bashur with 1000 "sky soldiers" of the 173 Airborne Brigade. This was one of the largest airborne combat insertion since the 1989 Operation *Just Cause* in Panama. The initial cadre was followed by 200 more members from the 86 ECRG and the 86 Expeditionary Air Mobility Squadron. Another 86 AW unit, the 37 Airlift Squadron flew into the airfield with its C-130E *Hercules* shortly thereafter. The first Hercules landed at 1400 on 7 April 2003 and delivered 593 members of the 86 AW who had processed through as many as five mobility lines at once at the outset of their deployment. US casualties were evacuated to Ramstein, often by 86 AW units, the 37 AS and the 86 AES.

By August 2003 the 86 AW units had flown more than 30 medical evacuation missions back to Ramstein. Once they were on the ground, critical care transport teams provided acute care and managed patient transfer to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

The 86's 37 AS aircraft also began to make deliveries to the forward base in Constanta, Romania on 6 April. In the ensuing week the squadron delivered 57 tons and 58 passengers to Constanta in just seven missions. Beyond this the squadron's nineteen crews continued to fly round the clock missions averaging 4.5 missions per day.

On 14 April, the 38 (P) began to fly Stage Operations from Souda Bay, Crete. Their first mission in Iraq was to airlift US Marines into Erbil in an effort to seal off the Iraq-Syrian border. A few days later, 17 April, the Bashur Airfield, which the 86 CRG had secured, opened and the first shipment of humanitarian aid arrived. It was destined for residents near Kirkuk, Iraq. During the 27 days of operation of this airfield the 86 Expeditionary Air Mobility Squadron received more than 370 fixed wing arrivals and departures, 4,200 personnel, and 21,500,000 pounds of cargo.

By 22 April the last aircraft transited Bashur Airfield and four days later, on 26 April, the 86 Contingency Response Group Commander, Col Steven Weart, notified higher headquarters, that Bashur Field, Iraq was now closed for air traffic. This was a unique situation since the 86 CRG normally turned its bases over for further operations. This marked the first time that the 86 CRG closed a base that it had opened.

On 3 May 2003 the 37 Airlift Squadron and 38 Squadron (P) established Constanta, Romania, Stage Operations. Flying from Constanta to Kirkuk, Iraq, the 38 Airlift Squadron (P) flew its first mission on 3 May and its last mission on 24 May, the last time the unit would fly into Iraq in support of *Iraqi Freedom*. On 10 July 2003 38 (P) Squadron flew its last Operation *Iraqi Freedom* support mission.

Not all of the 86 AW activity in 2003 was combat related. In the spring, a C-130E from the 37 AS flew to Moscow with other aircraft from USAF to participate in the Sixth Annual Moscow Air Show. These were the first US military aircraft ever to participate in an air show in Russia. On 30 August, four of the 737 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron's C-9A *Nightingales* were sent to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, also known as the

"bone yard." On 27 September 2003, the last C-9A of the unit was retired but was sent to the Reserves. On 1 October the 737 was deactivated and its personnel were absorbed into the other units of the 86 Operations Group. To help replace the C-9As, four C-21A *Learjets* were modified to accommodate a portable medical pallet called *Spectrum* to allow the aircraft to perform the medical evacuation mission.

2004: A Major Reorganization

At the beginning of 2004 the 86 Airlift Wing was the largest wing in the Air Force, and its sheer size raised various management issues. On 15 January 2004, the 86 AW was split into three wings as part of an arrangement arrived at in 2003 to increase organizational efficiency based on a pattern used by several units in the states. The 86 AW became Ramstein Air Base's operational arm with the 86 Operations Group, the 86 Maintenance Group, 86 Air and Space Communications Group, and 86 Contingency Response Group. The support function was taken over by the 435 Air Base Wing, which became the overall host base unit at Ramstein, with mission support, security forces, communications, civil engineering, logistics readiness and medical groups. A third wing, the 38 Combat Support Wing, commanded support and geographically separated units.

While it supported the Global War on Terrorism in the Middle East and East Asia, much of the 86 AW's focus was on Africa, which was in the US European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility. On 28 February 2004, C-130s from the 37 AS joined a humanitarian effort to bring supplies to Al Hoceima Province in northern Morocco. On 13 March 2004, in a "rush delivery," two C-130s from the 37 AS delivered more than 19 tons of humanitarian aid to Chad. The mission, which under normal circumstances would have taken several days to plan, was planned and the aircraft launched in less than one hour. On 6 June 2004, three 37 AS C-130s participated in a parachute drop with 13 other USAF airlifters to commemorate the 60 anniversary of D-Day.

During a two week operation in March 2004 the 37 AS and the 86 Contingency Support Group moved 252 tons of cargo and 357 US Army soldiers into Timbuktu, Mali, in support of the Global War on Terrorism. In August 2004, the 86 AW increased its

support of the Global War on Terrorism as wing personnel began to deploy as part of the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) "downrange," the euphemism for the Persian Gulf region or the areas in and around Afghanistan. Most of the Ramstein airmen, especially aircrew, were deployed to Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, where they served as part of the 386 Air Expeditionary Wing. Many of their combat missions were flown into Bagdad International Airport and Balad Air Base, both in Iraq.

In October 2004, two C-130s from the 37 AS deployed to Kigali, Rwanda, near the Darfur region of Sudan, to provide support and security to the United Nations agencies and non-government organizations in the region. During the deployment the crews transported 380 African Union troops and 3,000 tons of supplies. To close out the year, Ramstein C-130s supported the International Security Assistance force, the NATO rebuilding of Afghanistan.

On 23 February 2005 President George Bush visited Ramstein as part of a "fence mending" trip with European leaders, as Ramstein personnel continued to support Global War on Terrorism operations in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf in the Air Expeditionary Force. At the time over 1100 Ramstein personnel were either deployed, on the way to their deployment, or just returning from a deployment.

In July 2005, the 86 AW deployed three C-130s from the 37 AS and about 40 personnel to Kigali, Rwanda, in support of NATO missions in Darfur. In October returned the 37 AS many of the African Union troops to Rwanda. The deployment was similar to one undertaken in October 2004, when C-130s carried African Union troops on a thirteen hour flight to Sudan where they were to provide security for aid distribution operations in the area.

In August 2005, aircrew and maintainers from the 37 AS and the 86 Maintenance Squadron began to train members of the newly reconstituted Iraqi Air Force to fly the C-130E *Hercules*. The Iraqis new C-130 squadron consisted of three C-130Es sent to Iraq from Ramstein. The 86 AW Commander, Gen Robert Kane, later served as Commander of the Iraq Training and Advising Mission AF and presided over the transfer of the C-130 mission to the Iraqi AF in October 2009. The 37 AS was based at New Al Muthana Air Base and was dubbed 23 Squadron and, in late August, 23 Squadron completed its first mission, airlifting Iraqi troops into a combat operation. Another benchmark for 23 Squadron was transporting the Iraqi

leaders from around the country to the capital for Iraqi's first democratic election and the creation of the Iraqi constitution. By February 2006, 23 Squadron was flying two missions each day to help the busy U.S. C-130 squadrons. The flying missions were successful, but at the same time the Iraqi maintainers, trained by 86 personnel, were able to maintain the aircraft on their own. By July 2006, 23 Squadron was fully operational and the 37 AS personnel returned to Ramstein.

On 10 October 2005, Rhein-Main Air Base was officially deactivated and Ramstein Air Base now designated "The Gateway to Europe." Another bit of good news for Ramstein came on 9 December when, to the delight of about 3,000 soccer fans partying Kaiserslautern's *Stiftsplatz*, it was announced that the US national soccer teams would play its first rounds games in the FIFA World Cup in Kaiserslautern. It was quickly decided that the US team would be quartered at Ramstein Air Base.

2006: Ramstein "Best in the Air Force"

4 April 2006, was a big day for Ramstein and the 86 AW. Brigadier General Rob Kane, 86 Airlift Wing and Kaiserslautern Military Community commander, announced that Ramstein won the 2006 Air Force Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence. That same day, the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Inspector General announced the 86 AW earned an overall rating of "Excellent" for its first Operational Readiness Inspection in nine years.

On 5 May, Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Kenneth J. Krieg presented Ramstein Air Base with the 2006 Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence during a ceremony at the Pentagon. Team Ramstein was led by Colonel Richard Johnston, the 86 Airlift Wing and KMC commander, and accompanied by about 30 Ramstein members from all ranks, including a civilian and a NATO representative. The group was welcomed to Washington 3 May with an Air Force ceremony and office call with Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Michael W. Wynne, and senior leaders including General T. Michael Moseley, Air Force Chief of Staff and Major General Mark Anderson, the head of the installation excellence inspection team.

The 86 AW was also commended by USAFE for its actions from January 15, 2004 to October 31, 2005, as it led European Command's theater airlift force in fighting and sustaining the Global War on Terrorism. The 86 AW flew over 14,000 sorties, during which it delivered 43,521 passengers and 36,000 tons of cargo, and supported 7 major operations and 15 deployments in 30 countries. At the same time the 86 AW continued operations in the Balkans where it flew 465 combat sorties in support of Operations *Joint Forge* and *Joint Guardian*. Additionally, the wing supported Operation *African Movement* in Sudan, with 10 total deployed aircraft moving 1,821 Rwandan peacekeeping forces and 150,000 pounds of equipment to stabilize the strife-torn Darfur region. The 86 AW also supported Central Command Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* with a "steady state" deployment. The wing flew over 3,000 combat sorties, delivering 29,744 warfighters and 4,868 tons of cargo to the frontline, while also treating over 1,300 combat wounded at contingency aeromedical staging facilities.

In July 2006, the 86 CRG participated in the evacuation of American citizens from Lebanon when the Israelis launched an incursion into southern Lebanon and large scale fighting resulted. The 86 CRG aided the evacuation, but by the end of July Ramstein also served as a collection and departure point for over 1800 of the evacuees who were returning to the US.

In July 2006, the 37 AW received two additional C-130Es from Yokota Air Base in Japan, brining Ramstein's total number to 17. In another acquisition, the 86AW obtained a single C-40B previously operated by the 89AW at Andrews AFB to replace the C-9A *Nightingale* which was retired in 2005. The C-40B, 01-0040, was configured as an airborne command post and was not used on medical evacuation missions, unlike the C-9A that it replaced.

As the year ended, the 37 AS was tasked to increase the number of C-130Es it deployed "downrange" from two to four. This that had serious ramifications given the aging C-130E fleet.

The first half of 2007 posed maintenance challenges for the 86 AW. Four C-130Es were deployed and with the number of C-130s in the depot the number of available C-130s for flying was severely limited. Indeed, most of the wings actual missions for higher headquarters were flow by the 38 (P) Delta squadron. However, towards the end of the year an influx of C-130Es from other units, the return of many aircraft from depot

maintenance, and the cut of the number of crews and aircraft meant that the 86 AW was once more flying a full load of missions.

During part of the year the runway was also closed at Chievres, Belgium, the home of the 309 AS, which supported SACEUR. During this time the unit had to fly from Cherloi, Belgium. Another OSA aircraft, the C-20, was deployed for the first time "downrange" and had a very successful tour.

76 AS/86 AW C-20H Deployed Crew

On 2 February; the 86 CRG sent a team to Chad, Africa to help USAID with ongoing humanitarian operations.

While the 86 AW participated in numerous events in 2007, one of the most touching was a flight by one of the 38 (P) Delta Squadron's C-130s to Tripoli, Libya, which had once been home to a major American air base, Wheelus. When the United States was forced to leave, it left behind in a cemetery which held the remains of 72 dependents, all still born babies or infants. With the improving atmosphere between the governments of Libya and the United States, the 86 AW was told to proceed to the Libyan capitol, Tripoli, and recover the remains. A team led by General Johnston flew to Libya on 1 March 2007 to recover the remains, and they were returned to Ramstein to be returned to their families.

Much of the wing's activities in 2007 focused on Theater Security Cooperation, where 86 AW Airmen worked with friendly nations to exchange information and prepare to work together in the future, as well as Off Station Training.

One of the major focuses of the Theater Security Cooperation was on the Ukraine as the 86 AW established a "sister unit" relationship with the 25 Guards Regiment flying the Il-76 transport.

From January 31- February 3, members of the Ukrainian Air Force visited Ramstein and the 86 AW. They were hosted by the 86 AW commander, General Johnston. From 13-16 February an 86 AW team went to Melitopol Air Base, the home of the 237 Guards, for a site survey for a follow on visit by the 37 AS. The visit was followed by another visit from 12-14 November led by General Johnston to formally establish the "sister unit" relationship and assist the Ukrainian Air Force as they became the official component of the Joint Rapid Reaction Force.

Ukrainian Air Force 237 Guards Regiment Il-76

Russia was another area where Theater Security Cooperation Events took place. From 13-27 August, a C-130 from the 37 AS took part in the Moscow Air Show at Ramenskoye, Russia, the fourth largest in the world and in December a delegation from the Russian Air Force visited the 86 AW.

On August 2, the 37 AS supported airdrop operations by dropping Bosnian paratroopers near Banja Lake, Bosnia, an event that was viewed by the Bosnian president and the Chief of Bosnian General Staff.

During 2007 the wing added the 496ABS, Moron AB, Spain to the 86 OG

and the 38 CST to the 86 CRG, where it became the 86 CST. The 496 ABS was to prove especially challenging, since it was on a Spanish Eurofighter base and had a relatively small (approximately 96 personnel) US contingent and relatively little in the way of support structure. The 86 CST mainly consisted of local nationals, but efforts were quickly undertaken to add a larger American contingent so it could perform operations outside of Germany.

The wing also began to look forward to replacing its old C-130Es with new C-130Js. The transition was scheduled for April 2009.

Aircraft noise continued to be a major issue with the surrounding community. General Johnston, like General Kane before him, took a very active role in discussing the issues with the local mayors and the local communities to make sure they understood what the base was doing to keep noise under control within the boundaries of mission accomplishment.

The reorganization of 2005, when the 435 ABW and 86 AW split, was partially undone, at the end of 2007 when the position of Installation Commander was assigned to the 435 ABW/CC, Colonel Earl Matthews. In December 2007 General Johnston turned over command to Colonel William Bender, and with the departure of General Johnston and the assumption of command by Colonel Bender the KMC Commander position was turned over, on a temporary basis, to the 435 ABW/CC. There were no physical movements associated with these changes, and permanent changes were to be made in 2008 by the USAFE/CC.

In 2008, the wing experienced both triumph and loss. On August 11, Russia began an invasion of its neighboring country Georgia. The 86 AW had Airman from both the CRG and ACOMG on the ground in Georgia, and soon the 37 AS C-130Es began to fly humanitarian aid into the country while many of the 86 AW Airmen remained in place and performed their duties. Then, on September 22, tragedy struck. Major Rodolfo "Rod" Rodriguez was killed by a truck bomb in Islamabad, Pakistan, outside the Marriott Hotel. Rodriquez, a 34-year-old Air Force Academy Graduate and commander of the Contingency Training Flight, 86 Construction and Training Squadron became the first Ramstein Airman to die in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and the first Ramstein Airman to die in combat since World War II.

At the beginning of 2008, the increased numbers of C-130s available made it possible for the wing to resume flying HHQ directed missions around the USAFE AOR

and the wing began to fly a 24/7 schedule. At the same time, the arrival of the C-130Js drew closer and the wing put on a full scale planning push and began construction on C-130J infrastructure.

2009 A Year of Great Achievements

By 2008 it had become clear that the reorganization of 2003 had not yielded the kind of efficient organizational structure that had been hoped for. In 2008 restructuring was in the works once again. Under the 2008 plan the command was streamlined into a single command chain to a single airfield authority with a flying wing focused on flight line operations. The wing organizational structure and mission also changed in 2009 when the 4337 Air Base Wing was redesignated as the 4337 Air Ground Operations Wing, and the 431 Air Base Group was inactivated. The 435 AGOW assumed mission areas performed by elements of the 86, while mission areas previously performed by the 435 ABW were assigned to the 86 Airlift Wing. The 86, one of the largest wings in the Air Force, became the host wing for Ramstein Air Base.

Another great achievement in 2009 was the retirement of C-130E aircraft and the transition, beginning in April, to the bigger, faster, and stronger C-130J Super Hercules in the 86 AW. The end of the C-130E at Ramstein came on 2 November 2009 when Tail No. 72-1299 left for its new home at Powdiz Air Base in Poland. On 19 December the first C-130J Super Hercules mission was flown. On that day Maj. Robert May of the 37 Airlift Squadron, and his crew flew into Mali to bring home 17 troops who had been assisting with training Malian forces.

The changes that took place in 2009 greatly enhanced the ability of the 86 AW to continue to provide theater airlift support for U.S. European Command and U.S. African Command missions, aeromedical evacuation support, airlifting wounded warriors back to the United States, and operational support airlift through distinguished visitor support.

C-130J Super Hercules

2010 witnessed a good deal of activity. The 86 played a role in Operation *ENDURING FREEDOM* supporting the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The 86 AW also continued with partnership building in places such as Bulgaria, Rumania, and Poland. From 4 to 7 December, Two C-130J Super Hercules aircraft assigned to the 37 Airlift Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, delivered 65 tons of fire retardant to Israel. This was part of a joint U.S. European Command and U.S. Air Forces in Europe effort to assist the Israeli government deal with what was considered the worst wildfire since the country's founding in 1948.

Another significant development in 2010 was the establishment of the Deployment Transition Center, DoD's only Deployment Transition Center. It stood up 0n 1 July 2010 and has since that time provided world-class reintegration and decompression for over 4,350 Air Force, USMC and Navy redeployers from multiple mission sets or AFSCs/MOSs who were at high risk to traumatic exposure (e.g., Explosive Ordinance, Security Forces, medics, JTACs/TACPs) while deployed to the CENTCOM AOR. Humanitarian missions continued in 2011.

From 26 February to 16 March C130Js of the 37 AS flew 28 sorties transporting 628 refugees and 46.4 tons of cargo in

Tunisia and Egypt. From 19 to 23 March the 37 Airlift Squadron participated in Operation *ODYSSEY DAWN* to protect the Libyan people from Moammar Gadhafi's regime. The squadron successfully completed 22 missions, logging 149 flight hours during which it moved 278 cargo tons and 450 passengers.

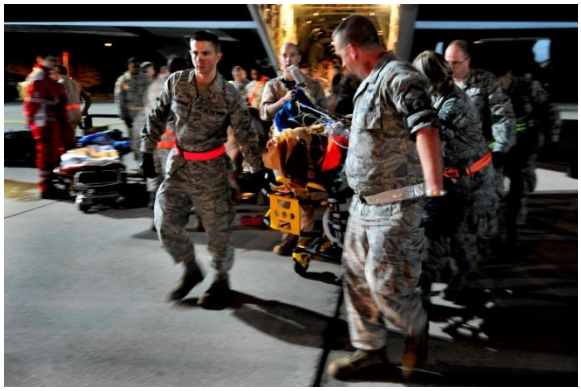
2011 was marred by yet another tragedy that occurred on 2 March when a member of the 86 AW family, A1C Zachary Cuddeback, was killed by a terrorist at Frankfurt International Airport.

Airmen load cargo into a C-130J Super Hercules for its departure in support of Joint Task Force *ODYSSEY DAWN* in March2011

On September 24 the citizens of Schopp unveiled a memorial in honor of 1sLt Salvatore Meli who had sacrificed his life in order to save the town from a catastrophe on 14 November 1956 when he successfully maneuvered his stricken F-86 jet away from the town and crashed on the outskirts of the Community of Schopp instead.

Ceremony honoring Lt. Meli in Schopp

On 29 October, the AW supported international humanitarian relief efforts in Libya at the request of the Department of State and by direction of the Secretary of Defense, USAFRICOM. The 86 AW transported four wounded Libyans to Ramstein for treatment in medical facilities in Europe and 28 for further transportation and to and treatment in the United States.



Airmen from the 86 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and a Critical Care Air Transport Team from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center unload wounded Libyan fighters from a C-130J Hercules.

The Operational tempo of the 86 AW continued unabated in 2012 as it supported AFCENT, EUROCOM and AFRCIOM missions. The first quarter of the year was also marked by recognition for the achievements of the 86 AW or its subordinate elements. On 2 March Rhineland-Pfalz, at a ceremony on base, attended by numerous dignitaries, Minister President Kurt Beck presented a streamer to Brigadier General Hyde commemorating the Wing's 60 years of service in Rhineland-Pfalz.

Rhineland-Pfalz Minister President Kurt Beck and Brigadier General Charles K. Hyde, 86 AW commander, placing streamer commemorating 60 years of service on Wing Guide-on

On 31 March the Ramstein Chapel Ministry Team was selected as the winner of the Charles I. Carpenter Award as the best large chapel program in the Air Force. Later in September the 86 AW was once again called upon to spring into action in Libya. This time, though, it involved the dignified transfer of the remains of US State Department Personnel who had been killed in Benghazi. The remains brought to Ramstein on 12 September and flown to Andrews Air Force Base on 14 September.

On 5 October 2012 The 309 Airlift Squadron was inactivated and the 424 Air Base Squadron was activated at Chievres Air Base Belgium.

In 2013 The 86 AW continued to support Operation Enduring Freedom in addition to supporting other tasking needs from CENTCOM. Beyond that the 86 continued to assist African countries in a variety of ways. On 10 July the first trans-Atlantic adult patient movement was carried out from Ramstein to San Antonio. From 10-12 Sep 2013, members of the 86 Aerospace Medicine Squadron visited the Nigerian Defence College (NDC) in Abuja Nigeria.

The purpose of the visit was to discuss the development of an Aerospace Physiology and Human Performance program by Nigerian Air Force (NAF). The NAF goal was to develop core medical competencies, and then train all physicians as Flight Surgeons. The Wing also continued to support humanitarian efforts and on 20 December 2013 the 37 AS delivered sorely needed supplies and

personnel to the Central African Republic as part of an international peacekeeping mission. In 2014 the 86 AW continued to provide support for CENTCOM operations in Afghanistan in addition to providing operational support for a variety of missions in Africa. In the Fall of 2014 when the EBOLA outbreak reached crisis proportions, the 37 AS was tasked to ferry badly needed supplies to Liberia in order to help combat the epidemic.

History of Subordinate Units

Two Squadrons, the 86 OSS and the 37 AS, were assigned to the 86 Operations Group (OG) in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Both units had a long standing lineage and honors and had amassed a proud history while assigned to other commands. The histories of both units are chronicled here to cover the time from the activation of the units until they were assigned to the 86 OG.

The 86 Operations Support Squadron

The 86 Operation Support Squadron was initially constituted as the 86th Airdrome Squadron(AS) on 16 Feb 1943. It was activated on 1 Mar1943 and assigned to the Third Air Force. The Squadron was stationed at Hunter Field, GA, from1 Mar until 7 Dec 1943. On 2 Mar 1944 the 86 AS was assigned to the Tenth Air Force in the India-Burma Theater. From 8 Mar 1944 until 16 May 1944 the 86 AS was stationed at Pandaveswar, India. From 16 May 1944 until 1 June 1944 at Kalaikundah, India; from 1 Jun 1944 until 4 October 1944 at Dinjan, India; from 4 October 1944 until 27 July 1945 at Myitkyina, Burma; and from 27 July until 26 December 1945, when it was inactivated, at Luliang, China. The 86 AS was disbanded on 8 October 1948. The Squadron was reconstituted and redesignated as the 86th Operations Support Squadron, and activated on 1 May 1991, and assigned to the 86 FW at Ramstein AB.

Campaign Streamers.

World War II

India-Burma

China Offensive.

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The 37 Airlift Squadron
(1942-1991)

The 37 Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS), according to Col Brian J. Duddey, USAF Ret., helped to "pioneer combat zone airlift, flying alone through hostile skies into flak and fighters to deliver their cargo to desert airfields still sown with mines and munitions."[1] The Squadron was constituted as the 37 Transport Squadron on 2 Feb 1942 at Patterson Field Ohio, and activated on 14 Feb 1942. On 4 Jul 1942 it was redesignated as the 37 Troop Carrier Squadron. The squadron was assigned to the 316 Transport (later 316 Troop Carrier) Group from 14 Feb 1942–8 May 1952. In November 1942 the 37 TCS was deployed to Egypt

During World War II, the 37 TCS participated in Operations which included airborne assaults on Italy, Normandy, Holland, and Germany; aerial transportation in Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO) and European Theater of Operations (ETO). The 37 TCS participated in the initial invasion of Normandy on D-Day, as a part of Operation Neptune, Mission Boston. The 37 TCS left England just before midnight on the June 5, 1944. According to the June 1944 37 TCS history:

> Eighteen combat crews participated in the initial invasion on D-Day . One of the very first squadrons to cross the invasion coast; paratroops and parapacks were dropped at 01:57 hours on the 6th of June 1944.
>
> The mission was a complete success and all crews and planes returned safely. Several planes were damaged by flack and machine gun fire. The following morning, 7 June 1944, thirteen planes were used to drop parapacks, containing ammunition and rations for the troops landed the morning previous. Due to dense instrument weather, three planes had to return to the base but the other ten planes carried out he mission successfully.
>
> Five of these planes were damaged by machine gun fire and flak. There was one personal injury the navigator on one plane, Captain

[1] Duddey, Brian J., *INVASION STRIPES:The War Time Diary of Captain Uhrig, USAAF and the Dawn of American Military Airlift*, ISBN: 978-0-615-62814-1, 2012.

Joseph M. Rieger was wounded in the left leg by enemy fire, and was taken to the hospital to have the bullet removed.

The result was that the 82d Airborne Division's missions involving the 37 TCS was carried out according to plan. That mission was the capture of Ste, Mere-Eglise, and success there was due in part to the exceptionally good drop of the 505th Parachute Infantry northwest of the city. Most of the regiment's planes were initially scattered like those of other Troop Carrier Squadrons, but they were able to circle back and release the paratroopers over the drop zone which had been clearly marked by 505 pathfinders.

After the Normandy invasion the squadron ferried supplies in the United Kingdom. The squadron also hauled food, clothing, medicine, gasoline, ordnance equipment, and other supplies to the front lines and evacuated patients to rear zone hospitals. It dropped paratroops near Nijmegen and towed gliders carrying reinforcements during the airborne attack on the Netherlands.

C-47A 43-15292 of 316th TCG, 37th TCS (USAF via AFHRA)

In December, the 37 TCS participated in the Battle of the Bulge by releasing gliders with supplies for the 101st Airborne Division near Bastogne. On 23 June 1948 the 37 TCS was redesignated as the 37 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium; and a little over a year later, on 8 Oct 1949 it was redesignated 37 Troop Carrier Squadron, Heavy. On 28 Jan 1950 it was once again redesignated as 37 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium. In the Korean War the 37 TCS flew airborne assaults at Sukchon/Sunchon and Munsan-ni, and performed aerial transportation between Japan and Korea.

The 37 TCS was inactivated on 18 Jun 1957. On 17 May 1966 the 37 TCS was activated once again, redesignated as 37 Troop Carrier Squadron, and assigned to the Tactical Air Command. The newly activated Squadron was organized on 1

October 1966 and assigned to the 316 Troop Carrier Wing. Then on 1 May 1967 it was redesignated as 37 Tactical Airlift Squadron. From November 19November 1968, until 1 October 1994, with the exception of 15 months when it was deployed to Taiwan, the 37 TCS operated alternately out of Mildenhall RAF, England or Rhein-Main AB Germany.

While deployed to 6 Dec 1972-15 Mar 1973 Taiwan (6 Dec 1972-15 Mar 1973), crews of the squadron flew to Hanoi on 17 Feb 1973 in support of Operation Homecoming, the participate repatriation of American prisoners of war. The repatriated US service men were ferried to Clark AB, Philippines.

The 37 TCS participated in airlift operations during Operation Desert Shield/Storm in Southwest Asia, 14 Aug 1990–29 Mar 1991.

On 1 April 1992 the 37 Tactical Airlift Squadron was redesignated as the 37 Airlift Squadron and assigned to the 86 Operations Group of the 86 Fighter Wing (redesignated as the 86 Wing on 1 Jun 1992 and the 86 Airlift Wing on 1 Oct 1994).

Service Streamers.

World War II American Theater.

Campaign Streamers.

World War II: Egypt-Libya; Tunisia; Naples-Foggia; Rome-Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Rhineland; Central Europe. *Korea:* UN Offensive with Arrowhead; CCF Intervention; First UN Counteroffensive with Arrowhead; CCF Spring Offensive; UN Summer-Fall Offensive; Second Korean Winter. *Southwest Asia:* Defense of Saudi Arabia; Liberation and Defense of Kuwait. *Kosovo:* Air Campaign.

Decorations.

Distinguished Unit Citations: Middle East, 25 Nov 1942–25 Aug 1943;
France, [6–7] Jun 1944; Korea, 28 Nov–10 Dec 1950.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
1 May 1967–30 Apr 1969; 1 May 1970–30 Apr 1972; 1 May 1972–30 Apr 1974; 15 Sep 1975–30 Apr 1977; 1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1980; 1 Jul 1981–30 Jun 1983; 1 Jul 1983–30 Jun 1985; 1 Jul 1985–30 Jun 1987; 1 Jul 1987–30 Jun 1989; 1 Jul 1989–30 Jun 1991; 1 Jul 1991-31 Mar 1992

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, 1 Jul 1951–[8 May 1952].
Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm: 1 Oct 1967–28 Jan 1973.

History of Ramstein Air Force Base

On 20 March 1945, the 319 Infantry Regiment of the US 80 Division captured the town of Kaiserslautern without resistance. American bombers had pounded the city repeatedly. The heaviest raids occurred on 7 January, 11 August and 28 September 1944, with the rail yard and main roads as the primary targets. More than sixty percent of the city was destroyed by allied bombers and, of the 20,000 homes located throughout the city, 11,000 were damaged or destroyed by war's end (the cemetery wall opposite Kleber Kaserne still bears the scars of these raids). With the Nazi surrender, the Saarland and Rhineland-Pfalz became occupation zones for French troops, just as they had after World War I. Although the French troops in Kaiserslautern administered the region, the US Army controlled the large and varied American elements garrisoned around the city.

The war was over in this highly agricultural area of Germany, still, there were food shortages because of price controls which led many urban dwellers to grow their own food while others made weekend treks to the countryside to barter for food. The situation lasted until 1948 when the German government made major fiscal reforms. A new currency, the *deutsche mark* (DM), replaced the old *reichs mark*, and at the same time, price controls were effectively eliminated. The result of these highly complicated maneuvers was a revitalization of the West German economy.

As Cold War tensions increased and the Korean War began, in 1951 the French and Americans agreed to a reciprocal agreement for the expansion of American installations in the greater Kaiserslautern area. Part of this agreement called for the construction of two air bases approximately seven miles west of Kaiserslautern in the area of Ramstein-Landstuhl. The bases were to be designed by French engineers, built by Germans, and operated by Americans.

The area was no stranger to military aircraft activity. The *autobahn* between Ramstein-Landstuhl had been used by the *Luftwaffe* during the last part of the war, and was also used as an airstrip by the advancing US Army Air Forces during the final months of the conflict. This airstrip was a straight section, four lanes wide and approximately two kilometers long and ended where

construction had stopped during WWII. Soon after the war the center median of the *autobahn* was removed to it could be used by larger Allied aircraft for emergency landings and other purposes.

Landing Strip circa 1951

In September 1950 during "Exercise Rainbow," the 22nd Squadron was based at Kaiserslautern, Germany and used the airstrip for its operations. The airstrip was in the middle of the forest, and though straight, there was a hump in the middle as it crossed a bridge over a railway. Since there were no taxiways, landing aircraft had to taxi to the end of the road and wait until all other traffic had landed prior to taxing back to the aircraft revetments located at the completed end of the runway. C-47s and C-82s also landed on this road. Originally this created a problem as the trees were so close to the road the aircraft could not turn around unless they taxied all the way to the end. To remedy this situation German foresters cut back trees in selected areas to make turn around points. A platform was built high in the trees, close to the railway bridge, so that both ends of the runway could be seen. Later when communications equipment was installed it served as the control tower. US Aviators later recalled that they lived in tents dispersed in the forest and for most of them it was like a big camping trip.

Thus, the building of a major airfield came as no great shock to the local inhabitants. Still, when construction of the 3,000-acre base began in April 1951, it brought a considerable change to the local community. Given the losses to the population of able-bodied men in the war, the German building firms that were contracted to build the airfield had to bring in young men as construction workers from all over Eastern Europe to work on the bases. Local German historians note that pubs soon sprang up around the workers' housing, and locals of both sexes began to mingle with the workers in these establishments. At the same time, Americans families began to arrive, and many young German girls were hired as baby sitters, bringing an influx of females. As all the groups began to mingle at the pubs and dances, this same historian notes that fights often broke out between the three groups, but that in other ways nature took its course and "friendships developed that ended in marriage.

The German firms completed construction quickly, and the US Air Force opened the first of the two installations in 1952. About a year later, 1 June 1953, Ramstein Exempt Air Force Installation, separated from Landstuhl by a central dividing road (today's Kisling Memorial Drive) opened to the north. The two bases had an unorthodox arrangement. Landstuhl AB contained the control tower, flight line, and aircraft hangars, while Ramstein housed the headquarters, administration and support facilities.

For a short time after the war the American military had a "no fraternization" policy with respect to German nationals, but this quickly feel by the wayside and the American military personnel and the local German nationals generally mingled quite well. Today older Germans look back on the Fifties and Sixties as the "Golden Years" of German-American friendship in the region. The dollar- *deutsche mark* exchange rate was quite favorable to the Americans, and they responded with buying habits that brought prosperity to local merchants. In May German-American "friendship weeks" were held when German nationals were invited to American bases to look at American equipment, watch such events as paratroop drops, and eat American food, especially the wildly popular American ice cream. Americans responded by joining many local clubs, participating in many local events such as the Ramstein *Fasching* (carnival) Parade. Local newspapers noted that "a piece of America has come to the Palatine" and that "the American is no longer gazed at like a strange animal…cowboy, gangster, or rich uncle." Germans also joined their American friends at clubs both on and off base.

The Arrival of MAC and USAFE Headquarters

On 1 May 1970, under the peacetime aerial port development program, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) began Phase I of its Dover Air Force Base, Delaware to Ramstein cargo channel operations. During the late fall of 1971, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) established the 608 Military Airlift Group at Ramstein which served as a supplementary

hub to Rhein-Main for C-141 and C-5 traffic transiting through Europe.

In November 1972, Headquarters, Seventeenth Air Force, returned to Sembach AB to make room for the transfer of Headquarters United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) from Lindsey Air Station at Wiesbaden. The USAFE commander's flag officially transferred to Ramstein on 14 March 1973. NATO subsequently established Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Central Europe at Ramstein on 28 June 1974. The new organizations brought with them the requirements for large amounts of construction of the various headquarters buildings and Ramstein flight line facilities that continued throughout the 1970s. One of the most important, the new USAFE underground Operations Support Center at Ramstein, opened on 26 April 1979.

Establishment of the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC)

The USAFE commander's flag officially transferred to Ramstein on 14 March 1973. NATO subsequently established Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Central Europe at Ramstein on 28 June 1974. Construction of the various headquarters buildings and Ramstein flight line facilities continued throughout the 1970s. On 26 April 1979, USAFE opened its new underground Operations Support Center at Ramstein.

As a result of the USAFE relocation, Ramstein entered a period of expansion, which resulted in some overlap of responsibilities between the USAF and US Army in the area.

Although the 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing had taken up residence at Landstuhl/Ramstein in 1952, the US Army continued to act as the central controlling authority for the growing Kaiserslautern Military Community. As the Air Force presence expanded, this became untenable and on 30 June 1975, the Air Force and Army signed CREEK SWAP, a memorandum of agreement in which Army units based in the Kaiserslautern area transferred to Wiesbaden and Mainz with a reciprocal move of Air Force units to Ramstein. This resulted in the establishment of the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC), which had the largest concentration of Americans outside the United States.

Since the Air Force accounted for the majority of American personnel stationed in the KMC the Army turned community oversight responsibilities over to an Air Force officer working at Kapaun Air Station in October 1976. He became the KMC Coordinator and was aligned under the 86 TFW commander. The KMC Coordinator served as the focal point for civilian community concerns, maintained liaison with the Army units remaining in the area and insured proper operation of the community's support structure. The Kaiserslautern Coordinator became a key position not found in other tactical fighter wings. This individual, working closely with the wing commander, coordinated activities with other Kaiserslautern-area installations.

On 1 Oct 1976, the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) became the host unit for the KMC and the 86 TFW commander became the KMC commander. On 5 August 1978 the 86 TFW converted the title of the KMC Coordinator's position to the Deputy Commander, Kaiserslautern (KCD). The change in the designation of the position reflected the incumbent's increased authority to administer the KMC as a direct representative of the KMC commander. On 1 July 1979, after long negotiations with the US Army 21 Support Command, the Army commander dropped his objections to the establishment of an Air Force-controlled military police organization in the KMC, and joint Air Force security police. As a result Army military police activities started. Between 1 October 1976 and 14 June 1985, the population of the KMC had grown to 70,000.

On 15 April 1983 the 86 TFW again restructured the KCD by "dual-hatting" the position with the 86 Combat Support Group commander in an attempt for more effective interaction with local German and US Army authorities. The responsibilities for the KMC grew and the increasing requirements for support from Ramstein led the Air Force to activate the 316 Air Division (AD) and the 377 Combat Support Wing (CSW) on 14 June 1985. The 337 CSW was assigned the task of controlling base operations. At the same time, the Air Division commander became dual-hatted as the KMC commander, and the former 86 TFW KCD position assumed a deputy position under the air division. The 316 AD and 377 CSW assumed control of all community support responsibilities, allowing the 86 TFW to concentrate fully on its operational flying mission.

On 1 May 1991, the Air Force inactivated the 316 AD and the 377 CSW, leaving the 86 Fighter Wing (FW) as the host unit once again. Under the new objective wing structure, the 86 FW commander took control of the KMC much the same way in which the air division commander had done. Two deputy commanders, one Air Force Officer at Kapaun, the KCD, and one Army Officer, dual-hatted as the 4137 Base Support Battalion commander--handled the community's day-to-day activities. In addition to providing support for the largest American community outside the US, the 86 FW and 21 Theater Army Area Command also took care of administrative and logistical support for numerous other US activities scattered throughout the European theater.

In early 1996, the wing closed its KCD position. While the wing commander remained the KMC commander, KMC administrative responsibilities again combined under the commander of the 86 Support Group (SPTG). A deputy of the 86 SPTG continued to provide KMC oversight from Kapaun for the Kaiserslautern area while an additional deputy provided KMC oversight from Sembach AB. This new organization streamlined the command structure and improved inter-service coordination. It also provided the 86 SPTG commander with more authority to administer the KMC.

When Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force closed on 31 July 1996, the 86 AW gained several units within the KMC, i.e., the 886 Communications Squadron, the 86 Materiel Maintenance Squadron and the Polygone Training Range in Bann. The wing also gained a two organizations considered outside of the KMC: the 469 Air Base Group at Rhein-Main AB and the 469 USAF Contingency Hospital in Frankfurt. On 17 September 1998 USAFE, through the US European Command, was granted approval from the Secretary of Defense to open negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany and Flughafen Frankfurt am Main AG for the full return of Rhein-Main AB. The agreed cost and infrastructure projects turned Ramstein AB into Europe’s main Strategic airlift hub.

On 23 Dec 1999, the Federal Government of Germany, United States Air Forces in Europe, German States of Hessen and Rhineland-Palatinate and Flughafen representatives met at Rhein-Main AB, Germany for the ceremonial signing of the final agreement for the full return of Rhein-Main AB to Frankfurt Flughafen

Corporation in 2005. The ceremonial became the catalyst for expansion of the KMC. With Rhein-Main's pending closer of 2005, Ramstein AB began to expand with personal, equipment and facilities to meet new mission tasking as the new Gateway-to-Europe. 2$ billion were allocated for the new construction at Ramstein to allow it to replace Rhein-Main as the Air Force's "Gateway to Europe." The facilities include a 20,000 square meter headquarters for the AIRNORTH staff and a state of the art Air Freight Terminal with a Mechanized Material Handling System that doubled the amount of freight Ramstein could handle. The most visible piece of the construction is the Kaiserslautern Military Community Center, including almost 70,000 square meters of concession space, four theaters, a 350 room hotel for visitors, and extensive parking, scheduled to open in early 2007. The consolidated facility will be 844,000 square feet and will include an eight-story, 350-room Visiting Quarters facility. AAFES facilities will include a four-plex movie theater, Power Zone, Outdoor Living, Toyland/Four Seasons, food court, new car sales and other vendors in an American-style mall layout. Services facilities will include a spacious Outdoor Recreation area complete with a two-story climbing wall, the Ramstein Tickets and Tours office, Romano's Macaroni Grill restaurant and a Sports Lounge offering local cuisine. The shopping center will feature some concessionaires available for the first time – stateside and overseas – as well as a large variety of specialty stores. This is the first time that the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and Air Force Services have collocated.

On 7 Mar 2003 approximately 540 Bundeswehr (German Army) soldiers began providing security for Ramstein AB and the KMC. This support was part of a two-year memorandum of agreement to have them perform gate security.

In 2004/2005, Ramstein Air Base underwent an extensive expansion with a major construction including an all-new airport terminal, among other new facilities, through the so-called Rhein-Main Transition Program which was initiated in support of the total closure of Rhein-Main Air Base on December 30, 2005 and transferring all its former capacities to Ramstein Air Base (70%) and Spangdahlem Air Base (30%).

While the KMC remained the largest U.S. community overseas at 39,000 people, the defense drawdown had a decided impact on its future. Due to the departure of other main operating installations, more than 100

geographically separated units received support from Ramstein.

Ramstein Air Base also served as temporary housing for the United States men's national soccer team during the 2006 World Cup. Many of the games were played in Kaiserslautern, and the KMC took an active part in supporting the US team and in the festivities in general. The U.S. national team flew into Ramstein June 15 to prepare for their match with eventual World Cup winter Italy two days later, on June 17. On the day of the game, the Air Force and Army MWR programs joined forces and the KMC hosted the Extreme Summer World Cup Fan Fest, held at Pulaski Park on Saturday. The event featured an array of live musical acts, games, a human foosball table and a 400 square-foot Jumbotron that showed the U.S.A. vs. Italy contest. Comedians Drew Carey and Greg Proops came to Ramstein to help entertain the crowd of more than 3,000 people, well as bands, concessions and children's' activities.

The KMC has met on a regular basis with Host Nation representatives to discuss issued of local interest and concern. On 10 July 2006, for example, Kaiserslautern Military Community and 86 Airlift Wing commander Colonel (subsequently Brigadier General) Richard Johnston met with Union Community Ramstein-Miesenbach on Ramstein Air Base to discuss construction projects, the economic impact and aircraft noise. Thirty mayors and council members from the Ramstein-Miesenbach area attended the meeting to voice their concerns and ask questions about Ramstein issues, as well as to take a base tour where leadership highlighted the base's mission and new construction projects. Colonel Johnston opened by saying, "I understand the challenges you have living next to a large air base, and I am here to provide you with information that you can take back to your constituents to explain the steps the base takes to be a good neighbor." The Ramstein leadership then responded to questions from Union Community.

On 24 December 2006 the 86 AW and the 172 AW (conducted Ramstein's first "real world" Category II ILS approach. REACH 210, a C-17 flown by a crew of the 172 Airlift Wing (Mississippi ANG) became the first crew to take advantage of Ramstein's new capability when they arrived Christmas morning after departing Balad Air Base, Iraq with one urgent and six priority patients plus another seven routine patients. As the crew approached Ramstein they found the reported ceiling to be at 100' and requested

the Cat II ILS to runway 26. The approach, landing, and taxi to parking were uneventful and all the patients are recovering at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center except for those who required urgent care; they were moved on to Brooks Army Medical Center three days after being declared Cat II and Cat III capable, the capability of the DoD's most capable airfield paid dividends.

In 2009, after a good deal of discussion, the base was once again brought under the control of the 837 AW. In the ensuing years Base Engineers spent a good deal of energy on Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization projects in order to maintain the aging infrastructure on Ramstein. Maintenance projects included expansion of the Commissary; modifications to the Airman Resiliency Center and German CPO Building; renovations to the Ramstein Bowling Center; renovations to the North Side Fitness Center; installation of underground conduits; manhole replacements; roof repairs; and Air Conditioning systems repairs. Another extensive project involved the multi-funded Officers Club renovation. The latter project was undertaken utilizing $3,288.00 in non appropriated funds and $4,098,200.00 in appropriated funds.

Other construction work included modifications to both the East and West Gates. Work included the addition of Canopies as well as enhanced security measures. While the Canopy work was completed in 2009, security modifications were not completed until FY 2012. Work was also performed on street and parking lot lighting throughout the base. Finally, several traffic circles were repaired or modified, and sidewalks were repaired or new sections constructed.

The 86AW assumed stewardship for Officer and Enlisted and Unaccompanied Housing on Ramstein and Vogelweh When the 86 AW assumed responsibilities for the Housing it inherited a number of an ongoing construction program of 833 new homes and the renovation of 55 additional homes at a cost of approximately $343M. By the end of 2010 the number of completed townhouses stood at 665. At the same time Engineers developed a General Officers Master Plan to refurbish or otherwise upgrade those quarters. Dormitories were impacted as well as 215 total rooms in buildings 2413, 2414, and 2773 were renovated.

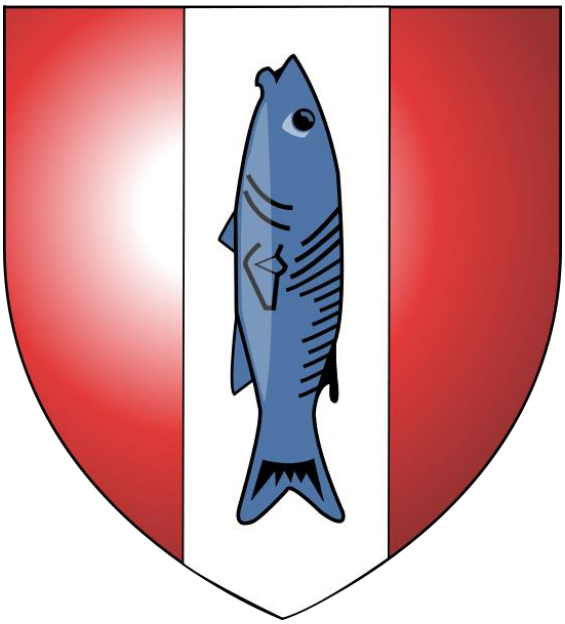
The History of the Kaiserslautern Region

Kaiserslautern's history began around 800 BC with the establishment of Celtic settlements along the banks of the Lauter River (really a stream), the main waterway of the region. The Romans occupied the area in 225 BC and established a more permanent settlement, but with the decline of the Roman Empire and the Roman withdrawal to Italy, the settlement was taken over by Franconians, a Germanic tribe, in the 6 century AD. They constructed a court for their ruler in the part of the settlement, which is still known today as *Alten Hof* (old court).

The Frankish monarch King Dagobert built Kaiserslautern's first castle in the Erfenbach-Siegelbach area in 622 AD. In 985, Emperor Otto III of Germany founded the first village where the Lauter made a section of Kaiserslautern an island. The name Lauter, hlutra in Middle High German, is a common stream name, and means “clear.”

The Lauter originates about 3km southeast of Kaiserslautern From there it flows along the main road in the north to the city of Kaiserslautern. Today it is channeled and runs mostly underground. In the garden show area an artificial source pond was created. From here it crosses the Neumühlpark until the New Lauter merges with the channeled (original) Lauter on the northern outskirts at a sewage treatment plant. From there, it flows mainly in northwestern direction over Otterbach, Katzweiler, Hirschhorn / Pfalz, Untersulzbach, Olsbrücken, Kreimbach-Kaulbach, Wolfstein, Upper Weiler-Tiefenbach, Heinz Stockhausen and Lohnweiler into Lauterecken where it flows into the Glan river which eventually flows into the Nahe separates the northern part of the Palatinate from the Hunsrück. It empties into the Rhine at Bingen.

Kaiserslautern (Emperor’s Stream) earned its name because it was the favorite hunting retreat of *Kaiser* (Emperor) Frederick Barbarossa, who ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1155 to 1190. He designated the area as the center of his Staufen empire and constructed his castle in Kaiserslautern between 1152 and 1160. He built a second castle on the Nanstein cliffs, near Landstuhl, to protect Kaiserslautern's western approaches. The Lauter River was an excellent source for fish, reportedly Frederick’s favorite dish, and an open-mouthed carp is featured in the center panel of Kaiserslautern’s red and white coat of arms.



Coat of Arms

Kaiserslautern continued to flourish after Frederick Barbarossa's death in 1190. In 1250, ground was broken for the *Stiftskirche* (steepled church), and in 1276 Emperor Rudolf von Habsburg gave the town its charter. By 1350, construction of the *Stiftskirche* was completed, along with St Martin's Kirche, an abbey erected for a local order of monks. In the rear courtyard of St Martin's a section of the original city wall still stands today.

The Holy Roman Empire, of which Kaiserslautern was a part, controlled an area that stretched from the North Sea to Sicily, and the roads in the Kaiserslautern region became one of the great east-west passageways between France and the Rhine Valley. One of the Empire's great roads extended from Paris to Saarbrucken through Metz, and then split near Homburg. One route went along the southern edge of a large swamp to Landstuhl and Kaiserslautern and on through the deep valley of Enkenbach to Alsenborn and Worms. The other branch snaked along the northern border of the swamp through Miesau, Ramstein, Otterberg, Langmeil, and through the valley east to the Rhine. A pathway of logs built over the swamp between Landstuhl and Ramstein connected these two routes

In 1519 Martin Luther stood Europe on its head when he ushered in the Protestant Reformation. That same year the

Franz von Sickingen became the owner of Landstuhl's Nanstein castle. Many of the reformers found shelter here, including Luther, who was offered safe haven. Sickingen tried to overthrow the Catholic Church with the help of the towns and peasantry in the area. He attacked the Catholic stronghold of Trier His attack failed and he was forced to retreat. Trier was loyal to the archbishop and the Count of Hesse and Louis V, Count palatine of the Rhine, came to his assistance. Sickingen, lacked support and was compelled to fall back on Nanstein Castle in Landstuhl. In the spring of 1523 he responded to censure by the Catholic leaders by sacking Kaiserslautern. The rulers of the cities in the region, especially Trier, Hesse and the Palatinate, marched on Landstuhl. Sickingen refused to negotiate, and his enemies laid siege to the castle and destroyed the walls with a newly developed weapon, the siege cannon. Sickingen surrendered and died shortly afterwards. His allies, the Protestant nobility, were conquered by the Catholic princes.

The outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618 ushered in a period of turmoil and destruction for Kaiserslautern. In 1621, the city fell to the Catholic Spanish who ruthlessly controlled it until 1632 when the Protestant Swedish army swept through the area. But there was no peace for the city, and three years later, in 1635, Croatian troops belonging to the Austrian army plundered the city and reportedly killed 3,000 of its 3,200 inhabitants. The neighboring city of Landstuhl was saved from a similar fate by surrendering.

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 ended the Thirty Years War. Still, the ruler of the region, the Elector of the Pfalz, had a difficult time maintaining order in the region. As a result, he ordered all the castles in the area, including Nanstein, to be destroyed. The area was now relatively defenseless, and its close proximity to France resulted in repeated French incursions and occupations of the Saarland and Rhineland-Pfalz. In 1713, French soldiers destroyed Barbarossa's castle and the Kaiserslautern’s city wall towers, and in 1793 French Revolutionary troops took over the area. It remained under French administration until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. At that time, Kaiserslautern and Rhineland-Pfalz became a province of Bavaria until the end of World War I.

After Germany’s defeat in World War I, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles resulted in French troops once again occupying the

region for several years. The German economy, exhausted after four years of war and hamstrung by the peace of Versailles, slowly recovered, but with the onset of the depression in the late 1920s, the German people faced runaway inflation and the highest unemployment rate in the world. As the rulers of the new German Weimar Republic disintegrated under the pressure of a ravaged economy, a small group of radicals, led by Adolf Hitler, a former corporal who had served in the German Army during the war, began to assert themselves. They formed the Nationalist Socialist Party, better known as the Nazis, and promised to break the shackles of Versailles and restore Germany to its rightful place as the leading power in Europe. By 1932, the Nazi party had become the strongest in Germany, and on 30 January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor.

Hitler quickly solidified his power base through the Enabling Act, which essentially allowed the chancellor and his cabinet to enact legislation without the Reichstag, and to make changes to the constitution. The Enabling Act allowed the Nazis to gain complete political power without the need of the support of a majority in the *Reichstag* and without the need to bargain with their coalition partners. Hitler soon outlawed all political parties except the Nazi Party, and then proclaimed himself the absolute ruler and *Fuhrer* of Germany. With broad popular support he discarded the Treaty of Versailles, rebuilt Germany's armed forces, and put the German people to work in the factories and fields. He also began to try to expand Germany’s boarders, first by re-occupying the Rhineland, next by annexing Austria, then, with the acquiesce of the Western powers, he moved into Czechoslovakia. Emboldened by these successes, he invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, which led to World War II.

USAF 60 Years in the Rhineland-Palatinate
Kaiserslautern American 16 March 2012
By Dr. Silvano A. Wueschner
Historian 86 Airlift Wing

If there is one question I have been consistently asked in the past six months, it is, "Why did the Air Force choose Ramstein as a location for a base? To answer that question requires that one frame the response in the context of the cold war. As the wartime cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union ended and tensions between the two countries mounted, the United States came to see Soviet expansionism as a threat to its own interests and began shaping a new policy of containment, a policy that crystallized in 1947 when suspected Soviet-backed Communist guerrillas launched a civil war against the Greek government. Soviet influence in Greece threatened U.S. interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, especially Turkey and Iran. American reaction resulted in the Truman Doctrine, which called for large-scale military and economic assistance in order to prevent communism from taking hold in Greece and Turkey and thereby lessen the threat to the entire Middle East. The congressional appropriation, which followed, reversed the postwar trend toward sharp cuts in foreign spending and marked a new level of commitment to the Cold War.

President Truman also turned to the National Security Council (NSC) to devise a new diplomatic and military blueprint. The result was NSC-68, a report which recommended an increase in U.S. conventional forces. In the ensuing buildup of forces, the number of U.S. Air Force combat wings increased from 48 in 1950 to 95 by June 1952. The increase in air assets and personnel required additional facilities to house them. More importantly, planners began to reassess how best to deploy their aircraft and associated facilities. That rethinking led to the decision to build six new bases in Rhineland-Pfalz, which at the time had two existing military airstrips, one at Pferdsfeld and the other at Baumholder. Pferdsfelt had been built by the German Luftwaffe in 1938. In the 1950s it was periodically used by the U.S. Air Force to conduct exercises. From 1961 until 1997 it served as a German Luftwaffe base once again. The airfield at Baumholder, built in the early 1940s**,** came under U.S. Army control in 1951 and was used exclusively by U.S. Army air assets.

There was also an auxiliary Luftwaffe landing strip on a portion of the old autobahn between Landstuhl and Ramstein. It was here that two adjoining bases, Landstuhl AB and Ramstein AB were to be located. From a strategic perspective, the decision to construct six bases on the west side of the Rhine made sense since it placed them behind a natural barrier, and in the majority of cases surrounded by protective topography. It also placed them in a straight line approach to the Fulda Gap, from where the Soviet attack on the bases in the Rhein-Main area was expected to begin. The Tactical Air assets based at these six bases could be used in an offensive or defensive capacity to counter the Soviet advance; or they could be employed to provide close air support for army infantry units meeting the Soviet advance head on. Evidence of planning for the latter contingency was seen on 11 February 1952 when the 86 FBW, based at Neubiberg, furnished four F-84-E Thunderjets for a combined infantry-artillery training exercise with the 2 Armored Division at Baumholder. The bottom line for military planners was that these bases would be better protected and in closer proximity to the forward edge of the battle area and easier to integrate into joint operations. At the time these bases were situated in an area of stability near an area of potential instability, much in the same way that Ramstein AB today operates from an area of stability as it carries out its missions in Southwest Asia, the Mid-East, and Africa regions.

Extracted from the 1952 history
(no edits or corrections)

The real estate for Landstuhl Air Base was acquired through three (3) separate land requisitions. The first and second portions were directly acquired by the French on 1 April 1951 and 1 0ctober 1951. The final portion of the real estate was requested by the USAF- through the appropriate French agencies and acquired on 27 May 1952.

The French phase of Construction was begun in April 1951. This phase consists of facilities that were funded by and constructed under the supervision of the French. Some of the facilities included in the - phase are the fol1owing: (1) runway, 3000' x 1501, (2) taxiway - 50 f t wide as required, (3) dispersal hardstands 75 each, (4) Alert aprons and (5) Hangar aprons. Construction of all the above facilities was started on 8 April 1951 and completed by March 1952

Other facilities which were started at an early date by the French are: (1) POL storage, begun on 15 Nov 51, (2) Ammunition storage which was started on 3 Mar 52, and (3) the railroad spur which was started on Dec 51. In addition, two 210' x 140' hangars were started in March of 1952 and completed in July 1952.

The majority of the other facilities which were constructed at Landstuhl were funded by the U.S. although construction was supervised by the French. Some of the facilities in this phase of construction are: airfield lighting communications building, base operations, control tower, crash and fire building, two (2) 1000 man mess halls, seven (7) 400 man barracks, two (2) BOQ's, three (3) squadron operations and equipment buildings, 60,000 sqft of warehousing, motor vehicle and A.I .O. shops, infirmary, post exchange, auditorium, and the Wing, Air Base Group and M & S Group Headquarters building. Still others are: officers mess, engine test block, aircraft wash rack, paint and dope shop, parachute building, guard house, and firing-in-butt.

One of the biggest problems concerned with the construction of Landstuhl Air Base has been the lack of an adequate supply of electric power. The permanent base supply of approximately 2500 KVA is to be furnished by HQ USAREUR's electric power net program in the French Zone. Original estimates called for completion of this net by 15 October, 1952, however lack of funds and a, firm construction program has resulted in moving the estimated completion date back to 15 January 1953. Since the move of an advanced party of the 86 F/B Wing to Landstuhl the base and the contractors have been sharing approximately 315 KVA of electric power. The base A.I.O. made numerous efforts to obtain additional 300 KVA but has been unsuccessful thus far. Supply Division, this headquarters (12th AF) will obtain electric power generators which will supply 850 KVA. These generators should be available by 15 Dec 1952.

A rail spur from the railhead at Einsiedlerhof enters the south east corner of the base- and provides – access to the warehousing area. The French, using their own funds, began construction on 23 November 1951. The facility was completed in July 1952. Part of the spur line was used by the contractors to haul construction material. However, before the Bundesbahn would agree to run their trains over this spur line it was necessary to reconstruct a portion of the

track. Several conferences with French authorities resulted in agreement that the work would be accomplished by the French using French construction funds. These repairs should result in making the railroad line usable by 1 November 1952.

Another problem that concerned the construction of the Air Base has been the location of the Schernau Labor Colony. This colony owns a large house and some farm land located in the northeast corner of the base. When the French made the original land requisition, this labor colony was permitted to retain their property and carry on normal operations.
However, since the 86 F/B Wing has moved to Landstuhl it has been determined that the location of this colony offered a definite problem in maintaining security and carrying out normal airfield operations. This headquarters has made several attempts to have this colony relocated, however to date no favorable actions have been completed on this matter.

In the spring of 1952, advance parties of the 86 F/B Wing were moved to Landstuhl Air Base. The movement of the accompanying aircraft necessitated the erection of security fencing around the hardstands parking areas. Projects for this work were prepared by this headquarters and the southwest and northern clusters of hardstands were completely fenced by September 1952. This hardstand fence now provides security additional to that which will be afforded by the base perimeter fence. The movement of this advance party made it necessary to ship approximately thirty five (35) 20’ x 80’ prefab buildings during April 1952 which were used as temporary billeting, messing, and administrative facilities.

In the spring of 1952 it was originally planned to construct approximately 800 dependent housing units in the Vogelweh area, Kaiserslautern. These units were to be used by personnel of Landstuhl and Sembach Air Bases. Additional requirements Kaiserslautern area and the Landstuhl extension made it necessary to construct approximately 1000 more dependent housing units. The following is the present program for construction of dependent housing facilities.

a) Vogelweh area - 824 units to be used by the Air Force are now being constructed by Rhine Military Post. It is estimated that 124 units will be completed by 15 January 1953, 371 units by 15 February 1953 and the final 329 units by 15 March 1953.

b) Landstuhl Extension - 1096 units will be constructed by Rhine Military Post for Air Force use. Estimated completion date for these facilities 1 June 1953.

Ramstein Air Base Operating Units:

86 Air Base Group.....5 Apr 52
7030 HQ Support Group; 7030 Support Group; 7030 Air Base Wing;
7030 Combat Support Wing..... 6 Apr 53
26 Combat Support Group..... 5 Oct 66
86 Combat Support Group.....31 Jan 73
377 Combat Support Wing.....14 Jun 85
86 Support Group..... 1 May 91
86 Airlift Wing.....27 Sep 02
435 Air Base Wing.....15 Jan 04
86 Airlift Wing.....16 Jun 05
435 Air Base Wing……20 Dec 07
86 Airlift Wing.....16 Jul 09

Ramstein Air Base Commanders

LtCol William F. Barnard Jr 5 Apr 1952
Col Franklin S. Allen 10 Jul 1952
LtCol Newton P. Littleton 18 Sep 1952 (temp)
Col Andrew J. Bing 22 Oct 1952
Col James W. Bennett 6 Apr 1953
Col Albert F. Law 1 Dec 1954
Col Herbert C. Hartwig 26 July 1956
Col Maurice R. Lemon 11 Dec 1959
Col Earl E. Batten 9 Feb 1962 (temp)
Col Maurice R. Lemmon Mar 1952
Col Robert J. Mason 15 Jul 1962
Col Frank X. Krebs 28 Jul 1963
Col James Vande Hey 24 Jul 1965
Col Henry F. Butler 25 Aug 1966
Col Michael J. Stublarec c. 5 Oct 1966
Col Jules X. Junker III 31 Aug 1968
Col Marvin F. Ewing c. 28 May 1971
Col William H. Luke 1 Jul 1971
Col Arthur R. Burke 29 Nov 1972
Col Harold E. Grant 1 Aug 1973
Col Attilo Pedroli 12 Oct 1974
Col Jerry L. Welch 2 Sep 1975
Col Robert B. Plowden 11 Aug 1977
Col Ronald L. Barker 24 Sep 1978
Col Keith N. Hall 12 Mar 1979
Col George W. Acree II 4 Jan 1980
Col Noah E. Loy 29 Jul 1981
LtCol W. David Kauffman 20 Feb 1982 (Temp)
Col John L. Borling 27 Feb 1982
Col Leslie A. Hobgood, 26 Jul 83
Col Eugene A. Lupia, 28 Jul 1986
Col William D. Eckert, 15 Jun 1988
Col Adelbert W. Carpenter, 12 Jan 1990
Brig Gen Richard T. Swope, 1 May 1991

Col Gary R. Bendlin, 29 Jun 1992

Brig Gen Tad J. Oelstrom, 3 Nov 1992

Brig Gen Jeffery S. Pilkington, 9 Jul 1993

Brig Gen William E. Stevens, 30 Jun 1995

Col Edward F. McPhillips Jr. (interim), 29 May 1996

Brig Gen John W. Brooks, 3 Jun 1996

Brig Gen Michael W. Wooley, 13 Jul 1998

Brig Gen Mark A. Volcheff, 24 Jan 2000

Brig Gen Erwin F. Lessel, May 2002

Brig Gen Rosanne Bailey 15 Jan 2004

Col Kurtis D. Lohide 16 Jun 2005

Col Earl D. Matthews 18 Apr 2007

Col Douglas Tucker, Interim 2 May 2008

Col Donald H. Bacon 1 Jul 2008

Col Thomas Gould 11 Jun 2009

Brig Gen Mark C. Dillon, 16 Jul 2009

Brig Gen Charles K. Hyde, Sep 2, 20011

Brig Gen Patrick X. Mordente, 10 Jun 2013

Brig Gen Jon T. Thomas, 19 Jun 2015

86 Wing Commanders

Col Clarence T. Edwinson, 1 Jul 1948
Col John S. Chennault, 31 May 1949
Col George R. Bickell, 16 Jun 1952
Col James O. Beckwith, 19 Jan 1955
Col Albert L. Evans Jr., 8 Jun 1956
Col James W. Little, 9 Jun 1958
Col Charles M. Young, 30 Jun 1958
Col Robert J. Rogers, 4 Jul 1959
Col George W. Rogers, 15 Mar 1961
Brig Gen Frank W. Gillespie, 30 Jun 1961
Brig Gen Thomas L. Hayes Jr., 10 Jul 1964
Brig Gen James M. Vande Hey, 12 Jan 1966
Brig Gen Richard N. Ellis, 28 Jun 1967–14 Nov 1968
Col Howard A. Jones, 1 Nov 1969
Col Wilbur L. Creech, 31 Dec 1969
Col Walter L. Doerty Jr., 17 Nov 1970
Col John J. Knight, 1 Oct 1971
Col James E. McInerney Jr., 19 Oct 1971
Brig Gen William F. Georgi, 31 Jan 1973
Col Edward J. Campbell, 13 Apr 1973
Col Lloyd C. Ulrich, 13 May 1974
Brig Gen Cornelius Nugteren, 22 Aug 1975
Brig Gen John H. Bennett, 15 Jul 1977
Brig Gen Harry Falls Jr., 6 Aug 1979
Col David M. Goodrich, 22 Jan 1980
Brig Gen Jerry W. Tietge, 28 Feb 1980
Maj Gen Robert C. Oaks, 28 Jul 1981
Brig Gen Ralph E. Havens, 24 May 1983
Col Clifford R. Krieger, 9 Jul 1985
Col Joseph S. Rodero, 13 Apr 1987
Col James I. Mathers, 16 Nov 1987
Col George W. Norwood, 17 Mar 1989
Col Roger E. Carleton, 23 Feb 1990
Brig Gen Richard T. Swope, 1 May 1991
Col Gary R. Bendlin, 29 Jun 1992
Brig Gen Tad J. Oelstrom, 3 Nov 1992
Brig Gen Jeffery S. Pilkington, 9 Jul 1993
Brig Gen William E. Stevens, 30 Jun 1995
Col Edward F. McPhillips Jr. (interim), 29 May 1996
Brig Gen John W. Brooks, 3 Jun 1996
Brig Gen Michael W. Wooley, 13 Jul 1998
Brig Gen Mark A. Volcheff, 24 Jan 2000
Brig Gen Erwin F. Lessel, May 2002
Brig Gen Robert C. Kane, Jan 2004
Brig Gen Richard C. Johnston, Apr 2006
Brig Gen William J. Bender, Dec 2007
Brig Gen Mark C. Dillon, Jul 2009
Brig Gen Charles K. Hyde, Sep 2, 2011
Brig Gen Patrick X. Mordente, 10 Jun 2013
Brig Gen Jon T. Thomas, 19 Jun 2015

Aircraft

F-47, 1948–1950

F-84, 1950–1953

F-86, 1953–1960

F-102, 1959–1968

F-100, 1960

F-104, 1961–1962.

RF-4, 1970–1973, 1976

F-4, 1971–1986

F-100, 1975

F-16, 1985–1994

C-135, 1992

C-12, 1992–1994

C-20, 1992–

C-21, 1992–

CT-43, 1992–1996

UH-1, 1992-1993

C-9, 1993-2003

C-130, 1994-

C-37, 2000-

C-40, 2004-